

# Young Klondike

## STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER.

Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, March 15, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 7.

NEW YORK, June 8, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

# YOUNG KLONDIKE'S GOLDEN ISLAND;

— OR —

## HALF A MILLION IN DUST.

BY AUTHOR OF "YOUNG KLONDIKE."



Six men were around the raft in less time than it takes to tell it, men who were powerful swimmers and had no fear of cramp. "We've got you now, Young Klondike!" one called out. "You might as well surrender, for we are coming aboard your raft!"



# YOUNG KLONDIKE.

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Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1898, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington,  
D. C., by Frank Tousey, 29 West 26th Street, New York.*

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## Young Klondike's Golden Island;

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### CHAPTER I.

FIRE! FIRE!

"HEAD her a little more out toward the middle, Dick; she'll take the current better and we'll make quicker time."

The boy who was steering the trim little steamer Edith down the Klondike river gave his wheel a twist and sent the boat out into the channel.

Steering steamers was a new business to Dick Luckey, but he was so bright and quick to learn everything he undertook, that he was already an expert at the wheel.

"We are making pretty good time as it is, Ned," he said to his companion in the wheel-house. "If we keep it up this way we ought to be in Dawson City before dark."

"That's right, Dick, and mighty glad I shall be to get there."

"And to see Edith and our old chum the Unknown again."

"Why, yes, we've been away from them two whole weeks now, and it seems an age."

"Wonder what the Unknown has been about all this time? He positively refused to go up to the El Dorado Creek mine with us."

"Looking for his man, I suppose. You know his weakness."

"Well, I think I ought to by this time."

The boys both broke into a hearty laugh.

The person they were discussing had been their constant companion ever since they left Seattle on their long journey to the Klondike gold region.

He was a detective by profession, and claimed to be in search of some mysterious criminal. So far, he had never caught sight of him, but he was always just on the point of "getting his man."

This was what Ned meant by their friend's "weak-

ness;" but he might better have alluded to another peculiarity of the Unknown.

These boys called their friend the Unknown because, although their acquaintance covered a period of many months, they did not yet know his name.

This seems strange, but it is nevertheless a fact. The detective had a different name for each day in the week. He was just as liable to call himself Brown as Smith, or Jones as Robinson, but what his name actually was no one knew.

So much for the mysterious Unknown. It takes a long time to introduce him, and while the introduction is going on the steamer Edith is going on, too, and making excellent headway down the Klondike.

As the boys rounded Moose Point, they sighted the old Belle of Yukon, the regular boat on the Klondike, coming up.

The captain of the Belle blew his whistle, and Dick responded.

"He's coming over our way," said Ned.

"That's what! Look! He's signaling us to stop."

"I suppose he wants to hear the latest news from up El Dorado Creek and French Gulch. We may as well humor him. I shan't mind hearing what they are doing down in Dawson, either, for we haven't had a word from there in the whole two weeks we've been away."

Soon the Edith was alongside the lumbering old Belle.

"Hello, Young Klondike! How's things up El Dorado way?" called the captain, looking out of the pilot-house window.

"Booming, same as usual," replied Ned Golden, who answered to the name of Young Klondike—a name which represented over a million, by the way, and one of the best known in Alaska and the Canadian gold country; for Ned Golden and Dick Luckey



although only two poor New York boys, had been most fortunate in their work in the Klondike country and were now millionaires.

"Made any big strike lately?" asked the captain of the Belle.

"We took out a nugget worth ten thousand dollars last week," Ned called back.

"You did, eh! Well, that's luck. The mine is paying right along, I suppose?"

"That's what it is. One output don't fall much below five thousand dollars a week."

"I'll bet you it don't. If you put it at ten thousand dollars a week you'd be a blame sight nearer the truth."

"Thank you. I try to keep pretty near the truth in my statements."

"No offense meant. How's the new diggings?"

"Do you mean the new diggings up Owl Creek?"

"Yes."

"We are getting ready to work them this winter."

"So I heard. They say you mean to run a big lot of men up there."

"We do."

"They tell me you have bought a big tract of land up Forty Mile Creek."

Ned laughed.

"Come now, cap, everybody seems to be talking about our business," he exclaimed.

"That's what they are, and you can't blame them for it. You've made a big name for yourself, Young Klondike, but you're going to have trouble up on Forty Mile—mark what I say."

"It's easy to say a thing like that, but what do you mean?" asked Ned, somewhat anxiously.

"No matter. I ain't telling all I know. How does the Edith run?"

"First rate. You ought not to say these things unless you mean to explain yourself, cap."

The captain of the Belle laughed and started his steamer.

"Then you won't give me the hint?" called Ned.

"'Tain't that I won't—I can't. I promised not. I only say look out for squalls."

"How are things in Dawson?"

"Lively. Too lively sometimes. See you later, Young Klondike, and then mebbe my tongue will be untied."

Whereupon the Belle lumbered on up the river and Dick started down with the Edith.

"What in the world do you suppose the captain meant?" asked Ned, once they were well under way.

"I'm sure I'll never tell you, but he must have had some crotchet in his head," replied Dick.

"Something to do with our purchase on Black Lake?"

"Evidently."

"I don't see how any one can dispute that we bought the claim direct from Colonel Jennings, the original locator."

But in spite of the confidence with which he spoke,

the captain's mysterious hints worried Young Klondike not a little.

The firm of Golden & Luckey which consisted of Ned, Dick and Edith Welton, a young San Francisco girl whom Ned had rescued from a wrecked steamer on the voyage from Seattle, had recently purchased a large tract of land on Forty Mile Creek, just over the American boundary line.

They had done this for the reason that many felt that ultimately Americans might be either forced to become British subjects or be ruled out of the Klondike country, which, let it be understood, is in Canada, a fact some don't seem to realize at all.

In case of such an event, Golden & Luckey wished to be prepared.

Neither of them had ever seen this new purchase, but those who had been on the ground reported the prospect very rich, and it was the intention of the firm to run the Edith down the Yukon to Forty Mile City, and go up the creek in a naphtha launch.

For a short time the boys continued to discuss the subject, but as they could come to no conclusion they at length gave it up, and no further allusion was made to it.

Dick kept the Edith steadily on her way, and in less than an hour they were drawing near to Dawson.

Night was now upon them and Joe Rhymer, the young German who acted as deck hand and general helper on the steamer, hung out the lights.

"What's that smoke, Joe?" asked Ned, coming up out of the cabin just then.

"Looks as dough it vas a fire in Dawson, sir," the boy replied.

And indeed the smoke did have an alarming appearance.

It rose in a heavy black cloud above the wooded hill which concealed the metropolis of the Klondike from their view.

As Ned stood watching it, the smoke assumed a ruddy glare, and all at once there was a burst of flame.

"Fire! Fire!" cried Young Klondike, running to the wheel-house. "By gracious, Dick, it looks as if Dawson was all ablaze."

"I'll be hanged if it don't!" said Dick. "I've been watching it these ten minutes. Sure enough, there must be a big fire down there, Ned."

"There ain't the least doubt of it. Look at it now. See the flames shoot up. It would be a bad job for Edith if it happened to be the hotel."

"It's impossible to say just what part of Dawson it's in," replied Dick, "but we'll drive ahead as fast as we can; it won't be many minutes before we'll know the best or the worst."

It was decidedly the worst when they came to know it.

As the steamer went around the big bend and all Dawson lay in full view before them, the boys saw that a terrible fire was indeed raging.

"Fire! Fire!" cried Ned. "The whole town is a goner, sure."



Now, Dawson City is rather a primitive place, and being entirely built of wood a fire there is a very serious thing.

Several times the devouring element had made sad havoc among the wooden shanties.

It was at it again now. At least a dozen houses could be seen blazing, sending up great tongues of flame, while the wind blew showers of sparks over upon the Yukon.

"Fire! Fire!" cried Young Klondike, whose excitement was increasing every moment.

And the Edith steamed toward the levee at full speed.

## CHAPTER II.

### JUST IN TIME.

WHEN Young Klondike and Dick Luckey landed at the levee in Dawson City, they found the whole town in an uproar.

The fire was raging at a considerable distance back from the water, and that brought it right in the heart of the city, in the immediate vicinity of the Mining Exchange and the hotels.

"Of course Edith and Mrs. Colvin must have gone to some safe place by this time," remarked Ned as they ran up the street at top speed.

"I can't believe anything else," replied Dick. "If the hotel ain't gone now, it soon will be. I wonder how it started? Half the town will go if they don't do something to stop it soon."

As they came in sight of the square they saw that the Dawsonians were doing all in their power to check the conflagration.

But it was hard work to accomplish much without a fire engine or a foot of hose.

A bucket brigade had been hastily organized, and water was being bucketed up from the river, to be thrown on the roofs and sides of the buildings which had not yet caught.

For those already on fire, little or nothing could be done, and the square was filled with tables, chairs, beds, and other household belongings.

Of course, the greatest excitement prevailed, and Young Klondike and his companion were scarcely noticed as they mingled with the crowd.

The hotel at which Edith and her friend and companion, Mrs. Colvin, were staying was located on the opposite side of the square.

The boys worked their way toward it through the crowd as rapidly as they could.

As they came out in sight of the hotel, which was a two story frame building, a little more pretentious than its neighbors, they saw that the roof had already begun to blaze.

The building seemed to be on fire around on the other side also.

No special attempt was being made to save it, the attention of the landlord and those who were helping

him being devoted to getting out the furniture, at which they were working as fast as they could.

The boys looked for Edith, but could see nothing of her in the crowd.

"Upon my word I'd like to know whether Edith is out or not?" said Ned, greatly troubled.

"She must be by this time," answered Dick. "Of course she had warning enough."

"I don't think you can be any too sure. At a time like this one don't want any guess work—one wants to know."

"There's Sam Ramsay, the clerk, he ought to be able to tell us something about her," exclaimed Dick, pointing to a young man who was helping to roll out a barrel of whisky through the bar-room door.

Ned and Dick ran over and lent a hand and the whisky was soon safe.

"Hello, Sam! What in thunder are you all about down here?" demanded Ned.

"About to burn up the whole blame town, I guess," replied the clerk. "Say, Young Klondike, have you got any things in our house?"

"There's a couple of trunks and a lot of my clothes up in our room," answered Ned, for during the last few months he and Dick kept a room constantly engaged at the hotel.

"I was afraid so," said the clerk. "Well, it's too late to save them now; there ain't no sort of chance for this old roost; she's a goner sure."

"Is everybody out?"

"As far as I know everybody is—ought to be. The fire has been burning half an hour around town."

"Where is Miss Welton and her friend, Mrs. Colvin?"

"Oh, they went out among the first. I heard Miss Welton say she was going around to friends of hers on Princess street. There ain't much danger of the fire spreading that way as long as the wind holds as it is."

"We'd better get right round there, hadn't we, Dick?" remarked Ned.

"Yes, indeed."

"Excuse me, boys! There's more whisky inside there, and I've got to hustle," said Sam, hurrying into the bar-room again.

Ned and Dick ran around the corner, that being the nearest way to Princess street, which lay at some little distance from the hotel.

As they passed the side door a cloud of smoke came pouring out, and they could see the flames bursting out of the rooms above.

"It's a bad business! A miserable business," groaned Ned. "All this valuable property destroyed, and for what? Some carelessness, I make no doubt."

"Help! Help! Ned! Dick! Save me!"

The cry came from one of the windows overhead in the upper story of the hotel.

Nothing could have been more startling.

Instantly the boys recognized the voice of Edith.

Looking up there was the brave girl leaning far out of the window.

"Oh, Ned! Do something for me!" she cried.



"Everything is all on fire at the head of the stairs! I shall be burned to death if I try to get down!"

But it was one thing to appeal for help, and another to render it.

There was no such thing as a ladder to be had there, and to go off and look for one would have been madness indeed.

To be sure, the distance down from the window was not more than thirty feet.

Either Ned or Dick could easily have jumped it, but for Edith it was quite a different thing.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, Young Klondike plunged into the burning building and rushed upstairs in spite of smoke and flames.

Dick followed him closely.

For the moment it seemed impossible to pass through the blazing corridor; flames were pouring out of several of the rooms.

Covering their mouths with their hands the boys ran on to Edith's door, and burst into the room.

The poor girl was almost overcome.

"Oh, Ned! You'll lose your life trying to save mine!" she cried. "Oh, I'm sorry you came—so sorry! What a fool I was! I was out all right and then had to come back again to get some of my things."

"Don't stop to talk! Don't say a word!" gasped Ned.

He tore the quilt off the bed and wrapped it around Edith.

"Follow close behind me!" he cried. "When the quilt gets burning so that you can't stand it, pitch it off!"

"And you and Dick?"

"We must take our chances. Stick close to the wall, Edith, and we shall all get out safe."

But Ned was looking too far ahead.

Already their escape was cut off if they expected to go by the corridor.

Flames were pouring out of several of the rooms; the floor had already caught, and the whole corridor was filled with a dense, suffocating smoke.

"We can't do it!" cried Dick. "There's no use, we've got to go back."

"Then Edith will have to jump to the ground."

"I'm afraid I can't!" gasped Edith. "You jump, boys—jump and save yourselves. Don't think about me."

"That's nonsense," said Ned. "Come this way. Of course we shan't desert you, Edith, and we don't have to. The other end of the corridor is all right, and the wind being the other way it is likely to stay so for a few moments at least. Come on! If we can't find some way of getting down by the end window we'll try the next best thing."

They hurried to the end of the corridor. Ned flung up the window and the wind sweeping through drove back the smoke, at the same time fanning the flames at the other end.

"It's easy getting down here," said Dick, looking out. "Keep cool, Edith; we are all right now."

And so they were, for underneath the window was a shed, and from the shed to the ground it was a comparatively easy descent.

But Edith would probably never have thought of this.

Confused and frightened the brave girl for once lost her head.

Undoubtedly Young Klondike and Dick came to the rescue just in time.

Dick sprang through the window and lowered himself down upon the shed.

Then Ned lifted Edith out, and holding on to her hands, lowered her cautiously until Dick could come to her aid.

Ned then followed himself, and they had even less difficulty in getting from the shed to the ground.

"Safe at last!" gasped Edith. "Oh, boys, how fortunate it was that you came."

### CHAPTER III.

#### HEARD IN BUCK BUDD'S BACK ROOM.

"WHERE are we now?" asked Edith, as soon as they had time to take breath.

"In somebody's back yard," replied Dick.

"Yes, and the best thing we can do is to get out of it in a hurry," added Ned; "the fire is coming this way sooner or later, wind or no wind."

It would have been dark but for the ruddy glare which the flames threw over everything, the sky being overcast and not a star out.

Looking around Ned saw a grated window in front of them, and a door alongside of it.

He stopped a moment to remember what building it was that stood immediately behind the hotel, and then was able to speak positively and say:

"That's Buck Budd's back room."

Now Buck Budd was a gambler, and kept what even in Dawson was known as a bad place, and very bad indeed it must have been, for in Dawson may be found some of the toughest dens of iniquity imaginable.

"Can we get through to the street?" asked Edith.

"Well, rather," replied Ned. "I'd like to see any one try to stop us."

"It would be just as well if you weren't seen though, Edith," said Dick. "Buck Budd's is a tough hole, and no place for ladies. Ned, we'll slip through the hallway. It ain't likely the door is locked."

The door right before them proved to be ajar, but before they had gone ten steps they came against another door which was locked.

Ned was just about to knock on the door when the sound of voices reached their ears.

They came from behind another door on their right.

This opened into Buck Budd's back room where the gambling tables ran day and night.



"Young Klondike!"

Ned did not hear all that was said, but he heard that sound, and holding up his hand for silence they paused to listen.

"If Young Klondike goes up Forty Mile there's going to be trouble," they distinctly heard someone say in Buck Budd's back room.

"They are talking about you, Ned," whispered Edith.

"Hush! I hear," breathed Ned, "and I want to hear more if I can."

The reply came in a mumbled way.

"Kill Young Klondike—too big for a boy—if he tries to stick—thundering rich claim—never hold it—shall be mine."

It was like an interrupted conversation over the telephone.

It came to Ned's ears in scraps.

"We must know more of this," he whispered. "Dick, I'm going to open that door."

"I wouldn't," said Dick. "We want to get Edith out of here first."

"Don't you stop to think of me," said Edith. "I've heard enough already, Ned, to tell me that you ought to hear more."

"Have you your revolver, Edith?" whispered Ned.

"No, I haven't. I left it in my trunk; it's burning in the hotel by this time, I suppose."

"Take mine, then. That's only in case we get cornered. Dick, you have yours all right, I suppose?"

"You bet!"

"Probably we won't have to use it. I don't believe there's more than just those two men in there now."

Ned crept up to the door and softly turned the knob.

The door was not locked. Pulling it gently aside Ned peered into the gambling room.

Faro table and roulette table were both deserted.

Over in one corner sat two men in close conversation near the stove.

Only a feeble oil lamp gave light in the room.

There seemed but little danger in Ned's undertaking.

He stole inside, Dick and Edith following him.

There was a large closet near, and the door of that stood open.

They all slipped into the closet pulling the door shut after them.

Here they could both see and hear without much danger of discovery, Ned thought.

Ned looked at the two men closely.

One was a tall, red-faced Scotchman, who seemed to be a new-comer in Dawson; the other was Buck Budd himself.

For the first few moments after Young Klondike and his friends began their detective work, they talked of the fire.

Buck Budd declared that he did not consider his place in the least danger.

"Let the old roost burn!" he said, speaking of the hotel. "I ain't going to worry about it while the

wind is the other way. I'd rather a blame sight stay in here and talk to you, Nick, than risk catching my death of cold standing round out there."

"I think surely we are safe," replied the Scotchman. "Anyhow, we can see out the window how things are a-going, and it's time enough to go out when we have to, I say."

"Exactly; now to get back to what we were talking about; it's really a fact, is it, that Young Klondike has bought the Jennings claim up, on Forty Mile Creek?"

"That's what everybody says, and you know they do say that what everyone says must be true."

"That young man is getting altogether too big for his boots," growled Budd. "As I said before, he wants taking down several pegs. I think, Nick, that you and I may as well undertake the job."

"Aweel mon, I dinna ken about that," said the Scotchman, "but what I do know is that the claim is a rich one, and it seems a muchle pity that its richness should be wasted on a mere boy."

"Exactly so; well, there's only one thing to do and that is to let Young Klondike get his start, and when things are running all right, we'll dust up there, and—gee whiz! the hotel is coming down!"

There was a terrific crash which brought Buck Budd and the man Nick to their feet.

Fortunately for Budd, the burning building fell the other way, and the flimsy structure in which his gambling saloon was located, escaped harm.

But Buck and Nick started for the yard, and in order to reach it, they had to pass the closet door.

Ned saw them coming, and tried to pull the door shut.

It would not close—there was something in the crack by the lower hinge.

Buck Budd heard the noise, and made one bound for the door.

Seizing the knob he pulled it open, and Young Klondike and his friends stood revealed.

"Spies, spies!" cried the Scotchman.

"It's Young Klondike himself!" gasped Buck Budd.

Dick and Edith tried to draw their revolvers, but they were not quick enough.

Before they could accomplish it Budd had them covered, and the man Nick whipped out his revolver, too.

"You young Yankee snoozer! How came you here?" cried the gambler. "Give an account of yourself, or I'll let daylight into you! Speak quick!"

"He'll speak when he gets ready. By the Jumping Jeremiah, Buck Budd, if you don't get out of this, I'll let daylight, or lamp light, or some other old light, into you!"

The voice came from the furthest corner of the room, behind the faro table.

Buck Budd gave a quick start and sprang away from the closet.

It was not until he got out of range of the closet and ventured to turn around, that he saw what Ned, Dick and Edith saw the instant the words were spoken.



For a little man wearing a battered plug hat and a pair of big, cavalry boots, which came up almost to his knees, had suddenly risen from behind the faro table.

In each hand he carried a cocked revolver.

One covered the Scotchman and the other the gambler.

Decidedly the little man had "the drop" on that precious pair of scoundrels, and decidedly they realized it, for both made a bolt through the outer door and ran into the back yard.

"The Unknown!" cried Ned, springing out of the closet. "By gracious you've turned up just in time to save us trouble; but how in the world did you happen to jump in here?"

"Don't I always jump in wherever and whenever I'm wanted?" chuckled the little detective. "Come along! Let's get out of this while we have a chance. I ain't spoiling for a fight, but I am going to stand by my friends."

He hurried them through the deserted saloon in front of the gambling room, and unlocking the door, led the way out into the street.

"Let's all go down to Judd's hotel on the levee," he said. "The fire is pretty well under control now and I fancy there'll be no more trouble. We've got to talk matters over somewhere, and it may as well be there as anywhere else."

"Well, if you ain't the greatest fellow in the wide world for turning up unexpectedly, I wouldn't say it!" remarked Ned, as they hurried on.

"Nothing strange or startling about it!" declared the detective. "All easily explainable. I was in the gambling room watching Buck Budd's game, when the fire grew so lively that he decided to close his place, and ordered everybody out."

"And you didn't go?" put in Ned.

"That's it, Young Klondike. If you'd written five octavo volumes and a supplement on it, you couldn't have made it plainer. I didn't go, and—well, by the Jumping Jeremiah, because I didn't go I stayed!"

"Lucky for us that you did," said Dick.

"Then your being there was only an accident?" asked Edith.

"The merest accident—a chance in a thousand. I went in to watch the faro game, and being a detective was ready for business, when I happened to overhear those two fellows plotting against Young Klondike; that's the whole story in a clam shell, and having told it I've got no more to say."

The Unknown was always running on in this way, but light and almost silly as his conversation often sounded, there was always some meaning in it.

As Young Klondike and Dick had long since found out the Unknown was a very shrewd man.

There was plenty of time to compare notes now, and they did it as they walked along.

"Never mind," said Ned, "there's a plot against us, but we'll down the plotters. It won't be the first time."

The fire was under control before they reached the hotel.

After seeing Edith safe in her room, the boys went after Mrs. Colvin and escorted her to the hotel.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STRANGE CRY IN THE STORM.

NEXT morning witnessed a scene of desolation in Dawson City.

Many were without shelter; many had lost their all.

Winter was close at hand—the terrible Arctic winter, with its mountains of snow and its temperature of fifty degrees below zero.

Something had to be done, and that at once, or great distress was sure to follow.

A meeting was called at noon in the Mining Exchange, and Young Klondike and Dick Luckey were there among other prominent mining men.

The mayor of Dawson City made a speech, in which he called for contributions of money and provisions—help for the unfortunates.

A few responded, but the matter seemed to hang fire, until Ned jumped up and began a stirring appeal.

There was great enthusiasm in the crowd the moment the boy stepped upon the platform.

"Young Klondike! It's Young Klondike!" they called out.

"Friends, I am not a citizen of Dawson," spoke Ned, in his clear, ringing tones, "but as you all know, my interests are closely associated with your own. I sympathize with you all deeply in the loss of which has come to your city, but believe me, it will be only a temporary setback. Dawson is destined to rise like a Phoenix above all such setbacks. Dawson is destined to become, not only the metropolis of the Yukon, but a large and flourishing city—a second Chicago, perhaps—who knows? That's my prophecy, friends, if I am not to be allowed to call you fellow citizens, and we must all put our shoulders to the wheel to overcome the conditions which have thrown us down. What we want is a fire department, a fire engine, a proper supply of fire hose right now to begin with, and a pump to throw river water enough to supply it. These things should be brought in immediately, before winter is upon us. Let us start a regular subscription for that purpose, and to aid those who have been burned out to replace their houses in better shape than they were before the fire came. This subscription I'll head with five thousand dollars, and I'll head another to buy winter provisions for the destitute Dawsonians with five thousand dollars more."

Then Ned sat down amid deafening cheers.

"Hooray for Young Klondike! Three cheers for the boy gold king!" they cried.



"I'll go five thousand dollars on each paper!" called out Dick, who had promised Ned to do this before he began to speak.

This brought out more cheers.

Other contributions followed.

In a surprisingly short time fifty thousand dollars was pledged toward the fire department and rebuilding fund, and thirty thousand dollars toward aiding the destitute.

It was arranged to place a copy of the subscription papers in every store, in which way additional names would no doubt be obtained.

The big guns of Dawson crowded about Ned and Dick, and heartily thanked them for their generosity.

"I'll do more than that, gentlemen," said Young Klondike. "Right here let me say that I'll give work to twenty men on our El Dorado Creek diggings right now; fifty men up at our new diggings on Owl Creek, and probably I shall be able to employ at least a hundred on a new claim I am about to open up."

"By gracious, you're a blessing to the community, young man," said the mayor, seizing Ned by the hand. "The city is supporting three hundred unemployed men at the present moment, to say nothing of those thrown out by the fire—it will be a big load off our hands."

"Well, I'll do it. You can send the seventy right up the river any time," answered Ned; "as for the others I shall be able to let you know after I return from a trip down the Yukon, which I expect will occupy about two weeks."

Word of what the firm of Golden & Lucky had done spread through the city like wildfire.

That night a public dinner was tendered to Young Klondike and his friends, at which all the big bugs of Dawson were present and a very enjoyable affair it proved.

Next morning before daylight the Edith started down the Yukon with our party and an escort of six men in case of trouble.

The run to Forty Mile was made without adventure.

Here the Edith was left in charge of the guard, and Ned, Dick and Edith started up the creek in the launch.

It was first intended that Mrs. Colvin should accompany them, but the good woman did not feel equal to the journey, so it was finally decided that she should remain at Forty Mile until their return.

Now, it may seem a big risk that Young Klondike had undertaken, to penetrate into an almost unknown country so late in the season, with no other companions than Dick, Edith and the Unknown.

Ned, however, was quite well used to such risks, and neither he nor the others gave the danger a second thought.

To have taken the guard with them would have been to put their secrets into the keeping of the whole Klondike community, something which they were fully determined not to do.

The Unknown started the launch at precisely nine o'clock, and by twelve our Klondikers were far up Forty Mile Creek.

In tow of the launch they had one of the Edith's best boats, in which were prospecting tools, two good army tents, plenty of ammunition and provisions for two weeks at least, even if no game was to be had—something very unlikely, for there was always moose and caribou, even if they were too late for ducks.

"How much further do we go before dinner?" asked the Unknown, when Ned, looking at his watch, announced that it was twelve o'clock.

"I think we might as well stop right here anyhow," said Dick. "It's a likely looking place and there ought to be some good fishing in the creek."

"See that mountain ahead?" Ned answered.

"I see; what of it?"

"We'll run up there and then stop."

"Not as good a place as this."

"Perhaps not, but it possesses one merit which this don't."

"Which is what?" asked the Unknown. "It possesses the merit of being infernally steep and rocky, but I don't see anything else about it to lure us on."

"Why, unless I'm greatly mistaken it's ours," laughed Ned; "and it's something to eat dinner on one's own land."

"Who says it's ours?"

"This map says so."

Ned tapped his breast pocket. It contained a map of the region through which they were passing, and had the Jennings claim marked off.

"Oh, if that's the case let's go up there by all means," said the Unknown.

"Is that the mountain we've got to cross in order to reach Black Lake?" asked Edith.

"That's supposed to be the one," replied Ned.

"Then we've made better time than I thought we had."

"We've done about thirty-five miles. You must have noticed that we are coming to no more camps, and you will recollect that I told you our claim lay just beyond the last of them."

Are there no more camps on Forty Mile?" asked Dick.

"There are a few a good deal further up, but this region has all been held under the Jennings patent which we have bought," Ned replied; "of course you know there are several locators on our land and we've got to get them off somehow; meanwhile we want to keep shady this trip and not let it be generally known who we are in case we run into any of these people, for I'm sure I don't want any more trouble than is necessary, and we are bound to have some anyhow, I suppose."

"Hold on, you are thinking of Buck Budd and his Scotch friend," exclaimed the detective. "I meant to have told you I found out something about that business, while you fellows were up on the Exchange."

"What did you find out?" asked Ned.

"That Scotchman is already located on the Jennings patent; it was because he heard that you had bought it that he came down to Dawson. I wouldn't



wonder a bit if he got in ahead of us and was up here on Forty Mile now."

"How could he do that?" asked Edith.

"Easy enough. There was a steamer down the river yesterday, and as it happened he was one of the passengers on board."

"Come," said Ned, "this is serious if you actually know it."

"Which I do, dear boy, or I wouldn't have said so, you bet."

It worried Ned some, but he wouldn't show it.

Instead of continuing the conversation he took up his banjo, which he always carried with him on these trips and began to play a lively air, Edith singing to his accompaniment.

Now, this was always Ned's way when he was bothered.

His motto was that it was never any use to borrow trouble, and all knew that he did not care to discuss the subject any further, so the matter was allowed to drop.

Meanwhile, the Unknown ran the launch on, and they were soon under the shadow of the mountain.

Here a landing was effected, and a camp-fire built.

Ned and Dick got out their fishing lines, and Edith took her rifle and started into the woods, on the mountain side, after game, while the Unknown busied himself in making some slight repairs which were necessary on the boat.

It was good fishing there on Forty Mile Creek. The boys had a fine mess by the time Edith fired her first shot.

Another and another instantly followed.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, Edith has run up against something, boys!" the detective exclaimed.

"That's what!" cried Ned. "Look! There she is now! Edith! Hello, Edith!"

Suddenly Edith had appeared on a rocky ledge far up the mountain side.

From this ledge the rock came down to the water almost perpendicularly, consequently, it was an easy matter to see the girl as she stood there, rifle in hand.

"I've got dinner enough for all hands!" she shouted down.

"Want any help?" called Ned. "Shall we come up?"

"No; I don't need any help. Look out, boys! Watch me send it down!"

Then Edith vanished among the trees.

In a moment she was back again, dragging after her a small brown bear.

"Hooray!" shouted the detective, tossing up his tall hat and catching it on his head as it came down. "Bear steaks are bully! I don't want anything better than that."

Edith tumbled the carcass of the bear down over the rocks.

It struck the tree tops with a terrible crash and the boys ran and picked it up, dragging it to the camp.

Now, with bear steaks and fresh fish with the var-

ious little etceteras brought along in the boat, there was no trouble in preparing a meal fit for a prince.

The boys had the bear skinned and cut up before Edith got down off the mountain, and the dinner which followed was certainly prime.

After it was over they started the launch again and ran about five miles further up Forty Mile Creek. And all this time they were on the great Jennings patent, the land to which Young Klondike, or rather the firm of Golden & Luckey now laid claim.

It was a great purchase and likely to prove a most profitable one if they could only hold it.

As Ned explained to Edith while they worked on up the creek, there was every probability of untold gold lying hidden in the deep canyons and the beds of the mountain streams.

But Young Klondike's greatest hope lay in the other slope where the mountains went down abruptly to a large body of water known as Black Lake.

How they were to get the launch over the mountain might have presented an insurmountable problem to one less posted than Ned.

He, however, knew just how to do it.

A little further on a narrow but deep stream had forced its way through the mountain.

It was the outlet of the lake, and ran through a deep canyon, whose walls in some places rose to a height of fully three hundred feet.

Many cross canyons broke the run, and each had its stream to add to the outlet of Black Lake, so by the time it reached Forty Mile, it was quite a considerable creek in itself.

Before sunset the launch came up to the mouth of this creek, which was carefully laid down on Ned's map.

Edith looked up at the frowning rocks which towered above them with something of awe.

"Do we have to go through that dreadful hole?" she asked.

"That's what we do, providing we want to get over on the other side of the mountain," replied Ned. "What do you say, Dick? Shall we tackle it to-night or not?"

"I wouldn't," said the detective. "I'd go into camp right here if it was me."

"If it was only me I'd put it right through to the lake or bust," said Ned, "but there's Edith to be thought of."

"Oh, don't think of me at all," said Edith, lightly. "I'm good for anything the rest of you are; let's put it right through."

"How far do you call it to the lake?" asked Dick.

"Why, it's only three miles," replied Ned, "but the trouble is the cross canyons. There's so many of them; you know we were warned against them. They say if a man gets lost in among them he's liable to have a lot of trouble getting out."

"That's exactly it," said the detective. "Now, look here, it's cold enough for snow, and it wouldn't surprise me a bit if we struck the first snow storm of



the season before morning. I think we'd better stay here."

"On the other hand, if we can put it through there's an elegant place to camp on the shore of Black Lake," mused Ned. "How long would it take us to make the run—just no time at all."

"So I say; let's go, Ned," said Edith.

"I say so, too," chimed in Dick. "Where's the fun living if one don't take some risk once in a while."

"Three against one," said the Unknown, lightly. "I'm bowled out and am willing to take my chances. Come, now, Young Klondike, if we are going, the sooner we start the better. I'm all ready for that supper by the shore of Black Lake."

"Let her go!" cried Ned, and the Unknown turned the launch into the canyon.

The instant they were between those rocky walls darkness seemed to settle down upon them.

The launch flew on against the current which grew more and more rapid, for the stream descended quite a considerable slope.

Silence seemed to have come upon the party all at once.

There was something awe-inspiring in being hemmed in between these rocky walls.

"How very dark it is, to be sure," remarked Edith. "I expected we'd lose some of our light, but I did not think it would be as bad as this."

"Night is coming on," replied Dick, "but I think our light will hold out till we get away from these rocks."

"It ain't that; you needn't flatter yourselves," said the Unknown.

"What do you mean?" asked Ned.

"That it's going to snow right away quick."

"Pshaw! I don't believe it."

"You'll know it in a minute," said the Unknown, grimly, and he had hardly said the words before an icy blast swept down the canyon.

It was the first touch of winter and it set all hands shivering.

"There's snow behind that, I'm afraid," remarked Ned.

"Sure there is," said the detective. "You may bet on it every time, dear boy. Ah! Here she comes!"

They had struck one of the cross canyons now.

As they flew past the opening a whirl of snow greeted them.

Through the falling flakes they could look up the narrow opening, and see mountain towering above mountain as far as the eye could reach.

"There!" cried the detective. "That's what you were warned against, Young Klondike. Fancy one being lost in that maze."

"It would be no fun," replied Ned, "and this storm is no fun, either."

"It's coming down as though it meant to last," said Dick.

"That's what it won't," said Ned. "You may depend upon it this is only a squall."

But before many moments had passed Ned began to wonder if he had not been mistaken in saying this.

The snow grew so thick and the darkness became so dense that they could not see a boat's length ahead.

Edith grew seriously alarmed and Ned himself felt very much the same way.

But the Unknown did not say "I told you so," as he might very well have done.

On the contrary, when Ned spoke of going back, he opposed it, declaring that altogether the safest way would be to drive right through to the lake.

By this time they had passed the entrances to three cross canyons, two on the right and one on the left.

What the Unknown feared was that, in attempting to return, they might by accident run into one of these.

In such a case, there was no telling where it might lead them.

To become entangled among these canyons would certainly be a very dangerous thing.

As the moments passed the storm grew worse and worse, and Ned became seriously alarmed.

"We oughtn't to go another foot!" he declared. "Dear me, I wish I hadn't even suggested coming in here, Zed. Don't you think after all we'd better go back?"

"No, sir!" cried the detective. "If we ain't lost now we soon would be. Our only hope is to keep right on."

And they kept on, but to no purpose.

The canyon seemed to grow narrower and narrower, more and more winding.

"There's something wrong," said Dick, dismally, after a long silence.

"I'm afraid there is," said Ned. "I was told that the canyon ran straight through the mountain, but this one we are in is anything but straight."

"Don't tell me you think we've got into one of the cross canyons, Ned," said Edith; "if you do I shall give up, for it's all my fault."

"No more yours than mine, Edith, but I'm afraid we are in the cross canyon, fast enough."

Edith gave an exclamation of despair.

"What do you say, Zed?" she asked.

"Oh, I came to that conclusion long ago," replied the detective, coolly.

"Then why in thunder didn't you say so?" exclaimed Ned. "At least, it would have given us a chance to go back."

"But I don't want to go back, dear boy."

"I do, then. We must turn around right now."

"Not with my consent. I'm looking for a place to land. We've got to go in camp here, to turn back would be mere madness, and—ah! I thought so! Here's the end!"

It was not the end of all things as one might have imagined from the dismal tone in which the Unknown spoke, but only the end of the canyon.



Suddenly the launch had come up against a solid wall of rock, hundreds of feet high.

The stream ended right there up against the wall.

Of course it must have found its way through some mysterious underground passage, but as far as the launch was concerned, they had come to the end.

Now, there seemed nothing for it but to turn back.

As near as Ned could make out in the darkness and storm, the rocks came right down to the water's edge all around, affording absolutely no landing place.

Worse still, the stream had now become so narrow that it would be almost, if not quite impossible, to turn the launch.

"Stuck, by the Jumping Jeremiah!" cried the detective, after making several attempts to work around. "Here we are, and ye gods and little fishes! here we are likely to stay!"

"Hey, hello! Hey, hello! Hey, hello!"

Suddenly the cry rang out through the darkness.

It seemed to come right out of the rocky wall itself, but whether on the right or the left, before them or behind them, Young Klondike could not tell.

"Hey, hello! Hey, hello! Hey, hello!"

Again and again the strange cry was repeated.

Dick shouted in answer, but that made no difference.

For a few moments the cry continued, then it died away until there was only the echo, and then all was still.

## CHAPTER V.

### OVER THE BLUFFS.

"WHAT in the world does all that mean?" exclaimed Young Klondike when at last the strange cry ceased to be heard.

"You tell me and I'll tell you," said the Unknown. "I don't see how any one can be near us unless he is on top of the rocks."

"Nor I," said Dick.

"And if there was someone on top of the rocks we could never hear him as plain as that," added Edith. "There is certainly something very mysterious about that cry."

"Ghosts!" suggested the detective.

"Ghosts!—nonsense!" said Ned. "That was a man, and he wasn't twenty feet away from us; look here, it's going to stop snowing, it may be lighter in a moment. Let's hold on and see what happens next."

"Ye gods and little fishes! I think we are very likely to hold on a good many minutes," chuckled the detective. "Mebbe you'd tell me how we are going to do anything else, Young Klondike? I'm sure I'd be very much obliged to you if you would."

"I would if I could, fast enough, but as I don't see any way, I guess I'd better hold my tongue on that subject. Dick, give that fellow another call."

"Hey! Hey! Hello there! Speak up and let's know who you are!" shouted Dick.

Now, Dick had a peculiarly shrill voice, and it might easily have been heard on top of the rocks, but no answer came back then.

"Pipe up and let's hear from you, Mr. Man!" roared the Unknown, whose voice was like a fog-horn. "Speak it out right now, or forever after hold your peace!"

It was enough to make the boys almost imagine that they had never heard the cry.

"It beats the band," said the detective. "But hold on boys, I think we are going to have some light shed on this mystery in a moment."

It certainly was getting lighter in the canyon, if that was what the Unknown meant.

The fact was the snow storm was only a squall and it had now passed away.

Although the sun had set there was still daylight left, for the sun gets behind the Alaskan mountains in a hurry at this season, but that don't mean that darkness is right at hand.

Now that the storm had gone, Young Klondike and his friends had a good half hour of twilight left.

This, of course, did not go for much down there in the bottom of the canyon, but it was something, and as the clouds blew away with the last of the snow squall the light which came showed the boys a narrow rift in the rocks right abreast of where they were.

The mystery of the strange cry was now in part explained.

It at least showed how it might have been possible for a man to be close to them and still not be seen.

"There's where he was," said the detective, pointing up to the rift. "He's gone back up on top of the cliffs. Anybody could go up there easy enough. See, it's not so very steep."

"That's what's the matter," said Ned. "It explains all but who the man was, and we want to have that explained, too. We want to know just where we are and the way out, and I'm going up there to get that desirable information if I can."

"No, you ain't. You shan't go! I won't let you," cried Edith.

"Oh, but I am—I must," said Ned, very decidedly. "You musn't think of stopping me, Edith; who'll go with me, you Zed, or you Dick?"

"I'm ready," said Dick.

"So am I," said the Unknown.

"Let it be Dick," said Ned; "you and Edith will spend your time trying to turn the launch, Zed. I think it can be done if you'll get out into the rift here and lift her partly up out of the water with a rope. I believe you can manage it. I'm sure I could."

"I know I can," replied the Unknown. "Don't you worry, dear boy."

"Why must you go, Ned?" asked Edith, anxiously. "I say, let's all stick together, and make the best of our way back to Forty Mile Creek as fast as we can."

"Yes, but how? We've lost ourselves in the cross canyons and don't know where we are. From the top



of the bluff here I can see everything, and then I can decide just which way to go. It would take us five minutes to get up there and less to get down, and then the job is done."

"Go on," said the Unknown, and after that Edith raised no further objections and Ned and Dick climbed out of the launch into the rift.

They now found themselves hemmed in between two rocky walls.

The ground was very steep and sloped abruptly.

It was all the boys wanted to do to climb up, and it promised to be just a slide coming down.

When they came out on top of the bluff, both were too badly winded to speak.

A view so vast as to be almost overwhelming opened before them.

They could look for miles and miles over an immense stretch of country, with mountains so high, that the one they were on seemed a mere pigmy, rising on all sides, but considerably in the distance long stretches of broken land lying between.

"Well, upon my word, this is great!" exclaimed Ned, when at last he was able to speak; "and only to think of it, Dick, the biggest part of it all on this side all belongs to us."

"It's enough to take a fellow's breath away," said Dick, "and mine is pretty well gone already. I suppose that is Black Lake there at our feet."

"It must be. Quite a big sheet of water, too, ain't it? See that island there in the middle?"

"Yes, indeed! What a bully place for a camp!"

"That's where our camp shall be then, and its name is Camp Luckey."

"I hope it's Camp Golden."

"The names go well together."

"You bet they have so far, and always will, I hope. Now, then, it don't look far down to the lake, but all the same, I can't see our way out of those infernal canyons!"

"Let's take a careful look and try to locate their course, if we can, while this light lasts."

This, however, was something easier said than done.

The windings of the canyons seemed endless.

There was the lake lying directly at their feet, so to speak, and yet they could see no way in through the hills.

"Know what I think?" asked Dick.

"That we'd better stay here all night?"

"Yes; all hands of us. We can make the boats fast and Edith and the Unknown will be able to get up here somehow and we'll go right into camp."

"It might be best if we were sure we are alone."

"You are thinking of that cry, Ned?"

"Yes."

"It meant something, sure."

"It meant that there was at least one man around here, and where there is one there are sure to be others."

"I suppose we may as well get back. Shall we decide to camp here or not?"

"I'm for it."

"So am I, unless—hello! There's a hut!"

Ned pointed down the cliffs where at some distance from them were two immense bowlders standing side by side a little back from the edge of the bluff.

Between these bowlders was a small hut roughly thrown together, built of the trunks of cedar trees, the roof being covered with sods from which the grass grew as green and luxuriantly as though summer was not almost gone.

"That's a queer house," said Dick; "we want to know more about that, Ned."

"Indeed we do—we must!" replied Ned, grasping his rifle.

It was a more startling discovery than one can understand who does not fully appreciate the position of the boys.

The wild region which they were now entering was infested with claim jumpers and toughs of all kinds.

The big Jennings patent had been located several years before the discovery of gold on the Klondike set everybody wild.

Jennings, the locator, had long since left the country and abandoned his land to the claim jumpers who had entered the place, locating at various points without possessing the shadow of a claim to the land.

Perhaps this hut belonged to one of them; Young Klondike was determined to ascertain.

As Ned and Dick approached the hut they could see no one, but when they were close to the door, a man suddenly sprang out rifle in hand.

He was a wild-looking specimen, dressed entirely in skins, and wearing his hair hanging down long over his shoulders below his fur cap.

"Who the blazes are you, and what do you want here?" he called out. "Stand back or I'll put a ball through you! Yes, I will!"

He raised his rifle and covered the boys.

"Hold on, neighbor," said Ned. "Don't fire! It won't pay you at all."

"Who says it won't?" growled the man. "I know you now! You are Young Klondike! You are the little Yorker who has come up here to drive us off our claims."

"I admit that I am the fellow they call Young Klondike," replied Ned, "but as to driving anybody off their claims, it's time enough to talk about that when I begin. Might I ask your name?"

"You can ask all you blame please, but I won't tell it. Was them your boats down on the crik?"

"Perhaps."

"Was they or wasn't they? Answer up, boy, or I'll blaze away."

"You'd better not try it. Two can work that business; but I don't want to conceal anything from you—yes, they were my boats."

"I thought so! Come in here. I want to talk to you both."

"Don't you go, Ned," whispered Dick.

"I guess not!" answered Ned. "He's too fierce altogether, but how shall we get away?"



"Come in, come in! Why the blazes don't you come in?" roared the man, still holding them covered.

"Ain't got time," said Ned, beginning to back away.

Of course the boys were both pretty well frightened. Why should they not have been? It was worse a moment later, when the man whistled and a huge white bull dog came bounding out of the hut.

"Go for 'em, Lion!" roared the man. "Chaw 'em up!"

The dog made a spring for Ned, who instantly fired.

With a wild yelp, the bull dog sprang into the air and fell over dead, while the boys started and ran for all they were worth.

It was an exciting moment.

The man fired two shots after them, swearing horribly all the while.

Ned stopped, turned and fired back.

He aimed at the fellow's right arm, and hit the mark.

As his rifle fell to the ground the man gave a yell of pain, and turning, ran into the hut calling for someone whose name the boys could not catch.

"Now's our time, Dick?" breathed Ned. "Run! Run, for your life!"

They made for the edge of the bluff at the place where they supposed the rift to be, but when they got there no light was to be seen.

They had missed the spot; it was growing darker every minute; looking back they could see three men armed with rifles running toward them from the hut.

"By gracious, Ned, this is a close call!" gasped Dick. "What in the world are we going to do?"

"We've got to stand and defend ourselves, that's all."

"They'll do us up, sure. We can't stand against them!"

"Wait! What's this?"

Ned was leaning over the edge of the bluff trying to look along and see the canyon, in the hope of catching a view of the rift, when he suddenly spied a heavy rope hanging down over the rocks at a little distance ahead.

The boys ran to the spot and found the rope made fast to a tree where it passed through a pulley block.

It was a double line, and very strong. There was a boat lying under the tree; evidently this line was used for hoisting it up and down.

"Here's our chance, Dick!" cried Ned, hurriedly.

He began to pull on the rope, which seemed to work freely enough through the pulley.

"Heavens! Do you expect me to go down there?" gasped Dick.

"We've got to or be captured."

"But where will it land us?"

"In the soup—I mean the water. The boat can't be far away."

Dick looked back at the three men. They were uncomfortably near and were running at full speed.

"Go on, Ned!" he cried. "The last man has got

the worst end of it here, and I'm that man. You go right on now!"

"You're first, Dick."

"No!"

"I say yes! Go! Go! Every moment is precious!"

"But the rifles?"

"We'll have to throw 'em down."

"And lose them?"

"We've got others in the boat you know, but we'd better lose our rifles than our lives. Dick, will you go?"

Dick, deliberately tossing his rifle over the bluff, caught the rope.

Ned caught it, too, and held back on it, allowing it to slip slowly through his hands.

It was an awful moment.

If the rope ran fast now—and it did—what would it be when he went down and there was nobody to hold it?

Ned held his breath and watched the approaching men.

"You want to surrender there, Young Klondike!" called one. "Your partner is as good as dead, and you'll be if you try that scheme!"

At the same instant Dick's weight came off the rope.

Where was Dick? Dead or alive?

Young Klondike did not know, but he did know that his own life hung by a thread, as he tossed his rifle over the bluff, caught the rope, and went whirling down into the darkness, the sharp crack of three rifles waking the echoes as he went.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES.

WHEN Young Klondike took the leap over the bluff he entered upon the most thrilling experience of his life.

The speed with which he descended was awful.

He could only clutch the rope and hold his breath as the rope went whirling down—down—down!

Down to land with fearful force upon a narrow ledge of rock at the foot of the bluff, where Dick stood ready to catch him and keep him from falling over into the water, some ten or fifteen feet below.

"By gracious, Ned, are you alive?" cried Dick.

"Oh, Dick, hold me! Hold me tight! My breath is all gone!" was all Ned could say.

Young Klondike's head was spinning. If it had not been for Dick's protecting arm, he would have lost his balance and gone tumbling into the creek.

"Cut the rope! Cut the rope!" he gasped.

Dick whipped out his knife and cut the rope in an instant.

It came whirling down, and struck both on their heads, and again they came within one of going into the creek.



"That settles them!" said Dick. "They can't get down to us now!"

"Yes, and we are all right for the moment," replied Ned; "but there is still the rift, and they'll be sure to come down there."

"Are we above or below it?"

"I'll be blest if I know. Wish I did. Give the Unknown the hail, Dick."

Dick put his fingers in his mouth and whistled.

Now there was nothing that could equal Dick's whistle. Of course it must have been heard on top of the bluff. It might easily have been heard a mile away.

It was instantly answered by a hoarse shout in the Unknown's fog-horn voice.

The sound came from below and not very far away.

"Zed! Zed!" yelled Dick.

"Coming! Coming!" answered the detective. "Where are you, boys?"

"Here! Here! Keep right along as you are going. You'll come to us in a minute."

"Are you all right, boys!" called Edith.

"Yes, yes!" answered Ned.

"What was the firing?"

"Toughs on the bluff."

"Keep cool! We'll be with you in a minute."

They could hear the puffing of the launch and knew that they had not long to wait.

"Where are the rifles, Dick?" asked Ned.

"I guess both went into the water. I don't see them here."

"No matter. We've got two more apiece in the boat. Here they come! We are all right, Dick. Don't you fret."

Dick was not fretting; on the contrary he was cooler than Ned, but then his experience on the rope had not been so severe.

The launch was up alongside a moment later, and both climbed in, Ned briefly explaining what had occurred.

"There you are," said the detective. "I mistrusted something of this sort. The quicker we get down the creek the better. They'll be pretty sure to meet us at the rift."

"Well, if they do, I guess I'm good for them," said Edith. "It's too bad about your rifles, boys."

"I ain't worrying a bit about the rifles," replied Ned, "but we may find that rope handy, and I'm going to have it. I see you managed to turn the launch all right, Zed."

"Yes, and I've turned it twice, and here it goes again," said the detective.

There was no trouble in turning here, and they were soon spinning down toward the rift.

It was now entirely dark, and the sharpest kind of a lookout was necessary in order to see anything.

As they flew past the opening, two shots rang out.

Where the bullets landed it was impossible to say. It was enough for Young Klondike that they flew wide of the boats.

"Safe!" cried the Unknown. "Now all we want

to do is to get out of these infernal canyons and on to the lake."

"The lake is within half a mile of us if we can only strike the right passage," said Ned.

"We may wander around here all night before we do that."

"I don't think it. I know the general direction of the lake now."

"How do you make it?"

"Right over these bluffs. We are going parallel with it as we are running now."

"Then we want to turn almighty quick, and by the Jumping Jeremiah, here's a turn now!"

They had come to another cross canyon, and the Unknown turned the launch in the direction indicated by Ned.

The canyon seemed to run straight toward the lake, and they soon found that such was the case.

Inside of ten minutes they were out of it.

Before them an immense sheet of water lay spread out, broken here and there by wooded islands and surrounded by mountains on all sides.

"Hooray!" shouted Dick. "We are out of our troubles at last. Now, which way is it? I'm tired of all this, and want to get into camp."

"We'd better make for one of the islands, hadn't we?" asked Edith.

"That's what I say," replied Ned. "From the island we can see the toughs if they try to attack us, and I make no doubt they will."

"It's to be expected," said the Unknown. "If they have started to run us out of here, we have a right to look for good solid trouble, but let those fellows beware! If they bother us, as sure as my name ain't Jay Gould I'll make them sup sorrow with a big spoon."

"Say, Zed, wouldn't this be a good time to tell us what your name is?" asked Young Klondike. "You are always telling us what it isn't; suppose you vary the monotony by telling us what it is?"

"Well, ahem! I would like to oblige you, dear boy, but—"

"But what?"

"I can't."

"And why?"

"For reasons."

"What reasons?"

"Of my own."

"It can't do you any harm to tell your reason?"

"Well, perhaps not, but—"

"But what?"

"I'll explain some day."

"Oh, explain now," said Edith. "We have never pressed you to tell your secrets before, Zed, but now we are all equally in danger, and really we have been so long together that we have a right to know your name."

"That's true."

"I'll tell you what it is, Zed," said Young Klondike, "we have never been able to make you a full partner in the firm of Golden & Luckey, for the very



reason that we did not know your name, and of course you can't expect a man to have a partner who goes incog."

"No; I don't expect it."

"How would you like to be a partner?"

"First class, you bet!"

"You shall be one. Tell us your name, and I'll give you an equal interest in these new diggings with ourselves, and a general interest in our whole business; just how much of a one to be decided later on."

"It sounds well, dear boy. It sounds first rate. Come. I like that!"

"I mean it—every word of it. You agree, Dick?"

"Of course I do," said Dick.

"And you, Edith?"

"Heartily," said Edith. "I'd like nothing better. Zed ought to have been our full partner long ago."

The Unknown took off his tall hat and mopped his forehead with a big red handkerchief.

"I declare it's enough to make any fellow tell his name," he said. "This expression of friendship, of confidence, of liberality is overpowering, I may say overwhelming, I—eh—that is to say I—well, I don't just know what to say—"

"Say your name," laughed Edith. "That will end the whole business. Just say your name."

"Easier said than done, Edith. If I was to tell you my name was John Smith or Bill Brown or Peter Furguson or any other old thing you might believe me, but if was to tell you what it really is you would never believe me in the world."

"And why?"

"I can only explain why by telling you my name."

"Try it on!" cried Ned.

"Do it and be done with it," said Dick.

"Well, I will," answered the Unknown. "I yield to the general desire, but let me understand the case fully. Is it the unanimous wish of the company here assembled that I tell my name?"

"It is!" they all cried in a breath.

"Very good; it certainly would be unkind to hold out any longer under the circumstances; my name is—ye gods and little fishes, Edith! Look there!"

It was no trick of the Unknown's to avoid making the disclosure that he seemed to dread so much, but circumstances certainly did combine to help him to keep his secret, for at that moment an enormous moose suddenly came out into full view on the shore of the island toward which the launch was heading, now not more than a hundred yards away.

"Hush! Hush!" breathed Edith, seizing her rifle. "I can take that fellow easy enough."

"Shall I stop the boat," asked the Unknown.

"Yes, yes! Quiet now! Hold it as steady as you can."

The wind was in their favor, and the moose did not seem to see them. Perhaps he had come down to the lake to drink, or perhaps it was his intention to swim over to the mainland.

As Edith sighted him all held their breath.

The suspense seemed endless, but there was still

some movement to the launch, and like all good marksmen Edith did not want to make a miss.

Suddenly her rifle spoke.

"Hit, and hit hard, by the Jumping Jeremiah!" the Unknown cried, as the moose gave a great bound into the air.

The poor animal tried to run, and did manage to get ahead a few steps, then all at once it went down on its knees, struggled to rise, and fell over—dead!

"That's the talk!" cried the detective. "We've got fresh meat enough to last us a week now."

"Yes, but it don't tell us your name, Zed," cried Ned. "You were just going to give it out, don't forget."

"Business is business, dear boy. Our business now is to get that moose before the wolves do it for us."

"But your name—the moose can wait—we want to know it."

"Oh, I haven't got any name; never had. I was born without one. Here goes for the moose!"

And the Unknown started the launch for the shore, pressing on at full speed.

It was no use to press him any further, and so Ned let the matter drop.

They soon made a landing on the island, where they found the moose waiting for them, which was not at all strange, since there were no wolves to be feared and the animal was stone dead.

It was a splendid specimen, but as the labor of skinning it and cutting it up was great, they determined to let it go until morning.

The first thing was to pitch the tents and make themselves as comfortable as possible for the night.

They put up the tents a little way back from the shore, on the bank of a small stream, which ran down from the hill into the lake, and then after a light supper, prepared without building a fire, for fear of letting their enemies know their whereabouts, all turned in except the Unknown, who agreed to stand first watch.

Ned was just dropping off to sleep when the detective came into the tent and shook him lightly.

"Come out here, Ned, I want to speak to you," he whispered. "Is Dick asleep?"

"Sound," replied Ned, springing up. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing much."

"Are you going to tell your name?"

"My name is Mud and so is yours if we don't keep a sharp lookout here to-night," replied the detective, leading the way out of the tent; "look there over on the hills, dear boy."

It certainly was somewhat startling.

Ned turned in the direction which the detective pointed, and saw a bright fire blazing on top of the hills through which they had just passed.

"The camp of the toughs!" he exclaimed.

"Their signal, Young Klondike. That's what it is! Now look over there!"

On the opposite side of the lake was another fire



blazing on the mountain side, and as Ned watched it another suddenly shot up a little further to the east.

"We are surrounded by enemies," said the Unknown, quietly. "They are signaling each other to let all hands of the gang know that Young Klondike has come out on the lake. Ha! There goes another. I thought so! There's music in the air, and we are going to hear some of it before morning, or my name ain't——"

"Don't tell me what it ain't, tell me what it is," said Ned, quickly.

But the Unknown only laughed.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FIRST STRIKE ON GOLDEN ISLAND.

"WAKE up, Ned! Wake up! It's morning! Change cars for Dawson! Wake up!"

Young Klondike, roused from his slumber, turned himself on the bearskin on which he was sleeping and started up.

"Hello! That you, Dick? What time is it, anyhow?" he asked.

"Half-past nine," replied Dick; "and breakfast is all eaten up."

"Half-past nine! Why in the world didn't you wake me before?"

"Oh, you were sleeping so soundly that I couldn't bear to wake you, especially after you lost all your sleep the first part of the night," said Dick.

Ned hurried out of the tent to find Edith clearing off the breakfast table, if the cloth spread on the ground could be called a table, but the Unknown was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Zed?" he asked.

"Gone back into the interior of the island," replied Edith.

"And for what?"

"He says he wants to know just what sort of a place we have landed on. He declared that he could not rest quiet until he had explored every foot of the ground."

"Just like him. Did he tell you about the fires last night?"

"Yes; he said you watched them till midnight. Do you really think they were signals, Ned?"

"I don't see what else they could have been, Edith; but we watched till they had burned themselves out, and as nothing came of it, went back to bed. Dick, did anything turn up between midnight and morning?"

"Well, nothing of any consequences," replied Dick. "About four o'clock I thought I saw a boat cutting across from one of the islands to the shore, but it got behind that little island over there, and I couldn't feel certain whether it was a boat or not."

"Oh, I suppose we've got to look out for squalls, so there's not a bit of use worrying about it," said Ned, carelessly. "Edith, have you saved any breakfast for me?"

"Did I ever forget you, young man? What a question to ask!"

"No, you never did—not once in all my experience with you as cook."

"To be sure! There's your breakfast over the fire."

Edith went to the iron pot, which hung suspended between three forked stakes, gypsy fashion, and raising the lid, took out a steak, tender and juicy.

"Moose!" cried Ned. "The best steak in the world! So you've cut up your prize already! Who did the work?"

"The Unknown," said Dick. "He wouldn't even let me help him. He did it before daylight."

"Didn't he sleep at all?"

"Only about half an hour; after that he was up and on the watch again."

"What a curious mortal he is. He never seems to rest."

"Never; and mighty lucky it has been for us. How many times has his watchfulness saved us from serious scrapes?"

"He is always doing it," replied Ned, bolting a mouthful of moose. "Looked about any yet, Dick?"

"Prospecting?"

"Yes."

"Well, I went up the creek a little way."

"How did things look?"

"Not very promising, but there's one hole that I think might go."

"We'll take a look at it as soon as I've finished breakfast. Get the tools ready. Edith, will you go, too?"

"Don't you think I'd better stay here on the shore and keep watch?" asked Edith.

"Well, I suppose you had; it would be safer."

"You and Dick go, then. If you hear a shot you'll know what it means."

Ned hurried through his breakfast and then loading themselves down with picks, shovels and pans, he and Dick started up the stream.

It was only a small affair—one could step right across it easily enough.

Ned kept a sharp eye on the bottom, but was unable to detect even the slightest trace of gold among the sand.

"It certainly don't look promising and that's a fact," he remarked, "but to tell the truth, Dick, I didn't expect it. This place has all been prospected by the claim jumpers. If there had been any big surface showing here, they would have gone to work on their island long ago."

"Do you think that?"

"Of course I do."

"Then I'll prove that there must have been a surface showing here at some time or other."

"Hello! You've found something more than you said?"

"No. I said I'd found a hole and so I have, but it's a deep one, Ned."

"A prospect hole?"



"You bet."

"And abandoned. That don't speak well for our island, Dick."

"Pshaw! it's only one. This is a good sized island; there's no telling what we may strike before we are through."

"Yes, and all the other islands are on our claim too, Dick. We have got our hands full if we are going to prospect all of them before snow flies."

"That's right, and something tells me we won't have to do it. I believe we are going to strike it right here. There's your hole, Ned."

They had come suddenly upon a place where the stream tumbled down over rocks about ten feet high.

This was a likely spot to look for gold, and sure enough someone had been there before them looking for it, for a hole four feet wide by ten feet long had been sunk about twenty feet right at the foot of the falls.

By means of a little dam the water had been turned away from it, and there the hole was dry enough with plenty of gravel in the bottom, but no sign of gold that Ned could see."

"I didn't go down," said Dick, "because I had no way of getting up again, but I'll go if you tie the rope under my arm."

"Oh, I'll go!"

"No, no! let me go, Ned! You want a lucky man to begin work on the island here, that's sure."

"All right. Lucky it is, and I hope may be. It's your first try this time, Dick."

Ned then adjusted the rope under Dick's arm, and now carefully lowered him into the hole.

Then he sent a pick-ax and a pan down after him, and Dick went to work.

The pan when full was hoisted up by Ned, who lowered another.

While Dick was filling the second pan, Ned washed out the first.

There was not a trace of gold to be found in it when the last of the water was run out.

"Any show?" called Dick.

"Not a bit."

"That don't sound well. Try this."

"You try it in the wall," said Ned. "I like the look of the gravel there toward the falls better than I do that in the bottom of the hole."

"Oh, I guess it's all alike."

"I ain't so sure. My idea is that this island is rather a recent affair, cut out by some great flood. We ought to look for the gold nearer the ledge rock; it would naturally lodge there."

"All right! I don't suppose it makes much difference. If there'd been anything here, the claim jumpers would never have abandoned the hole."

Ned then worked out the second pan.

This time he was more fortunate.

There were two nuggets and quite a little flake gold left behind.

But in the eyes of Young Klondike this did not amount to much.

He was used to better things and consequently was not likely to be attracted by any such showing as this.

"Any luck?" called Dick.

"About an ounce."

"That's something. It shows that there is gold here."

"It will have to pan out better than this to hold me to the island. I wouldn't go much further, Dick. We'll try a pan or two from what you have got out."

Dick had been digging away in the side of the shaft and had just started to loosen a large mass of earth and gravel.

"I'll make a finish of this," he called, driving his pick-ax behind the loosened mass. "Come out here, you! Once more! Oh, Ned! What in thunder is this?"

Dick's pick-ax suddenly flew out of his hand.

Then there was a tremendous crash, and a great mass of loosened earth and gravel, hard frozen, as the soil always is beneath the surface in the Klondike country, suddenly fell.

It did not fall outward as they expected, but instead went the other way and vanished, leaving a great, gaping hole in the side of the shaft.

"I've lost my pick, Ned!" Dick shouted.

"Yes, and we've found a cave!" cried Ned, greatly excited.

And well he might be.

In such caves, under the beds of mountain streams, great deposits of gold are very often discovered.

Golden & Luckey had already had one or two such experiences.

Ned never dreamed of meeting with another here on this island, but it had come.

"Can you see anything in there?" he shouted, for Dick was peering into the hole.

"Not a thing. It's as black as night."

"Hold up! I'll be with you in a second!"

Ned hastily secured the rope around the trunk of a tree, and lowered himself down into the shaft.

He brought with him the lantern which they usually carried on these prospecting expeditions, and lighting it waved it in at the opening.

"'Tain't deep," said Dick.

"No; a regular cave; but it runs away in under the hill."

"There ought to be gold there, Ned."

"So there ought. If there is we'll have it out, you bet!"

"Better explore it right now, hadn't we?"

"That's what I say. Come on!"

Ned climbed through the hole and dropped into the bottom of the cave, a distance of about four feet.

A great mass of gravel went down with him.

Ned was buried up to the knees, but the distance down was reduced for Dick to about two feet.

The cave was some ten feet in width, and extended in under the hill further than they could see.

There was a stream running through it which lost



itself under the bed of the stream and seemed to have no connection with it.

"It's just the place for a big find," declared Ned. "If we don't strike it rich here I shall be very greatly surprised."

He put the lantern down beside the stream and dropping to his knees began to peer down into the water.

"See anything?" asked Dick, "for my part I don't."

"There seems to be some yellow specks there."

Ned rolled up his sleeve and thrust his hand down into the water.

The "yellow specks" eluded his grasp. Just as he thought he had them, he found he hadn't.

These repeated efforts stirred up the water so, that after a few moments they could not see anything.

"We can't work it this way," declared Ned.

"Let the lucky man try," said Dick.

"Try it, then—it will be going it blind, though; you can't see anything at all down there now."

Dick bared his arm to the elbow, and began fumbling about in the turbid water.

"I've got hold of something or other that has the feel of gold," he exclaimed. "Here, what do you make out of this?"

One glance was enough to send Ned's shout ringing through the cave.

"A nugget! A big nugget!" he cried. "By gracious, Dick, you've struck it rich, for fair."

What Dick had pulled out of the stream was an irregular mass of broken quartz, about as big as a man's head.

It's color was a dirty brown, broken here and there by dashes of yellow and white.

The yellow was gold, and the white quartz rock fairly bristling with the precious metal.

The weight of the mass was tremendous. It was all that Dick could do to lift it out of the bed of the stream.

"Well, what do you say to that?" Dick asked, triumphantly.

"Three cheers for the lucky man! Dick, there's thousands of dollars in that lump."

"That's what there is. Like enough there's more down there."

"We'll build a fire in the cave and soon find out."

"Hold on! Did you hear that?"

"You bet I heard it," was Ned's whispered answer, and the boys remained motionless, listening.

A tremendous pounding had suddenly begun in the darkness away up at the other end of the cave.

"What's it mean, Ned?"

"That we are not alone here, that's certain, Dick."

"I should smile! It must be the toughs."

"Like enough this cave has another entrance."

"Has an entrance you mean. This ain't one. We made it. Don't forget that."

"Somebody is working up there at the other end sure, and we've got to find out who that somebody is. Hadn't we better put the light out?"

"How in thunder can we see then?"

"We don't want to be seen; there's daylight enough through the hole to guide us after we get used to it. Put out the light and I'll go back after the rifles."

When Ned returned with the rifles, Dick reported all quiet.

"The pounding stopped right after you went away," he said. "I haven't heard a thing since."

"We'll soon know who it is. Keep still now, Dick. Don't make a sound as you go along. Hadn't we better take off our stockings and shoes?"

"If we do, these stones will cut our feet so that we shall go stumbling about and make more noise than we would with them on."

"Like enough. We'll go on as we are, then. Hello! There they are at it again."

The pounding was suddenly resumed.

"Come along," said Ned, "we'll find out what it means or bust."

They moved on into the depths of the cave.

The light coming from behind, showed them their way for a few moments, but after a little the cave took a turn, and they found themselves plunged into complete darkness.

All this time the pounding was going on.

Suddenly there was a crash, followed by a loud shout, and all sound ceased.

"Who can it be?" breathed Dick.

"There's some fellow working on ahead there, that's certain," replied Ned. "All we can do is to sneak up and find out who it is."

"Going to try to drive them off?"

"That depends upon how many there are. There's the light! We are almost to the other end of the cave."

Another turn had brought them in sight of the mouth of the cave. It was a broad opening, through which the daylight came streaming in.

But no one was to be seen there, and except for their own footfalls all was quiet in the cave.

"I believe we've been heard," said Dick.

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Then whoever is there is laying low for us."

"That wouldn't surprise me, either."

"We've got to look sharp if we mean to go on."

"Which I do, and don't you forget it. There'll have to be something to scare me before I allow myself to be scared."

They crept on. Near the mouth of the cave were great masses of broken rock, which appeared to have fallen down from the roof.

A dozen men could easily have hidden behind these rocks, but look in whichever direction they would the boys could not see any one.

They stood still for a long time watching and listening, but there was no sound.

"Whoever was here has gone, that's what's the matter," said Ned. "I'm going forward, Dick."

They moved on until they were very close to the mouth of the cave.



"Well, I'll be blest!" Dick suddenly burst out, stopping short.

All fear of a hidden enemy was forgotten in the discovery Dick had made.

There, strewn over the ground, lay half a dozen or more big nuggets, the smallest being as large as the one Dick had taken out of the underground stream.

Someone had been breaking the nuggets by throwing a heavy stone on them.

Two were shattered all to pieces, and the gold lay strewn about.

"A find! A big find!" cried Ned. "Hooray! This is Golden Island! I name it right now, for as sure as shooting, we've got another bonanza on our hands!"

Now, of course, this was very impudent of Ned, but then he was greatly excited.

He had reason to regret his enthusiasm, when a deep voice suddenly called out behind them:

"Drop that gold, young feller! It belongs to me! I tell you to drop that gold!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHERE IS EDITH?

NATURALLY Ned was startled.

He grasped his rifle and looked around.

"Stand firm, Dick," he whispered. "It is only one so far, and it will take a good deal more than one to drive us out of this cave!"

"Don't brag, Young Klondike! I can lick you two fellows with one hand!" the voice called again.

"Come out of that and show yourself!" shouted Dick. "You old fraud! I know you well enough, now!"

And sure enough it was only the Unknown who jumped up from behind one of the big stones.

"Zed, I've a good mind to make you acquainted with my rifle for giving us such a scare!" cried Ned, but the tone in which he spoke showed how immensely relieved he was.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed the Unknown, scrambling over the rocks. "So I did scare you, eh! Well, you deserve it. Why, didn't you keep a sharper lookout and see me before I dodged down behind that stone?"

"That will do! You didn't see us till we got close on to you."

"Yes, I did, too! I saw you five minutes ago!"

"We were here five minutes ago; never mind. Is there anyone else here? That's what I want to know about now."

"Nobody that I know of. At least I haven't seen anybody; we are monarchs of all we survey."

"And the survey seems to be first-class."

"You bet it is! What's the matter with the old Unknown making a good strike as well as the next one? It's a big thing, Young Klondike; the bed of

this stream is just one mass of gold, but I want you to understand I named this island for myself before you came here, so you needn't have been in such a big hurry to give it a name."

"What name did you give it?" asked Ned, quickly.

"Unknown Island! Ha! Ha! You didn't catch me napping that time, dear boy."

"Unknown Island don't go. It's Golden Island, and not named for me, either. I declare, I never thought of myself when I named it, and you may believe it or not just as you please."

"How did you get in here, Zed?" asked Dick, breaking in upon this bantering.

"I can show you that best by going out with you. The hole is big enough, ain't it?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that. I mean whereabouts on the island are we?"

"Right over the hill; directly at the other end from the camp."

"That so? Let's go out and see."

"You bet it's so; say, how did you get in?"

"Broke our way through the wall of an old abandoned shaft," replied Ned. "Somebody has been working on the island. It is strange they never found this cave."

"They probably never took the trouble to explore," replied the detective, "for the opening is as big as all out doors, and you see how the gold lies scattered round."

It was very plain that no prospector ever could have been in the cave, for the nuggets would hardly have been allowed to remain if any one had seen them.

The boys now began overhauling their find.

The nuggets numbered twenty, big and little.

"By gracious, there's a fortune right here!" exclaimed Dick.

"How much should you say there was?" asked the Unknown.

"Oh, there must be at least thirty thousand dollars' worth of gold in these nuggets," declared Ned.

"All of that. Look at the bed of the creek."

One glance was all that was necessary.

The bed of the creek was yellow with little nuggets from the size of a pea up to that of a pigeon's egg.

Ned saw that they had made a find of surprising richness.

"Edith wants to know about this," he declared. "Let's get right back to camp, and bring the boats around to this side of the island."

"And make our camp here?" asked the detective.

"Certainly; do you see any reason why we shouldn't?"

"Nothing, except that we have reason to expect an attack which our friends from the canyons may make on us, to come from the other side."

"I don't believe there's a bit more danger from one side than the other," declared Ned, and then they all went out of the cave.

They now found themselves but a little way back from the lake shore at the foot of the hill.



Ned looked off on the lake.

"I don't see the first sign of a living soul," he remarked.

"Nor did I when I was on the hill," declared the Unknown, "and I took a good long look, too. It may be that they have decided not to bother us, but I don't believe it, though."

"I'd like to believe it," said Ned.

"No more than I would. I ain't spoiling for a fight by any means, but I'm all ready for it in case it comes."

"I'd like to see the time when you weren't ready for a fight, Zed."

"And I'd like to see the other end of this hole, dear boy. I want to know all there is to be known about Golden Island. What's the matter with our going back through the cave?"

"The matter with me is I want to see what lies on top of the cave," said Dick. "I'd rather go over the hill."

"Go on that way, then, and Young Klondike and I will return through the cave and meet you on the golden shore."

"It's six of one and half a dozen of the other," declared Ned. "Come on, Zed; I'll show you the way through the cave."

"And I'll go over the hill," said Dick, and off he went, while Ned and the detective re-entered the cave.

There was plenty of time to look about now, and Ned made a careful examination of the stream as they advanced, the detective holding down the lantern so that he could see the bottom.

The great display of nuggets continued for a few yards and then suddenly disappeared.

"That's the end of them, Zed," remarked Ned.

"They may strike down deeper; you can't tell, Young Klondike."

"No; you can tell nothing about it. Anyhow, we've seen enough to show us that this place will pay to work."

"Yes, and richly pay us. What we want to do is to get a force of men on the island before snow flies; then we can defy the toughs and claim jumpers, but I advise you not to try to hunt them off the land altogether. It will only make you unpopular, and you don't want that."

"Did I ever do anything of that kind?"

"Never to my knowledge."

"And I ain't going to begin now. We can't work the whole Jennings' Patent all at once. I shall let these men stay and try to sell them the claims they are working. If I fail in that, we'll see what can be done next."

They kept on through the cave and climbed out of the shaft.

"It's a big find," said the detective. "We can work it from both ends, and I predict that the amount of gold we take out of that cave will be enormous. You ought to let me in on that deal, Young Klondike—you really ought."

"Look here, is there any deal worth being in that you haven't been in?" asked Ned.

"Well, no; you've been very liberal considering how little actual work I've done."

"You've helped us in other ways, Zed. Don't you fear, you'll come in on this all right."

"But I mean as a full partner."

"I stand ready to do that, too, any time that you—"

"That I tell my name, Young Klondike?"

"Exactly so."

"Well, then, I suppose I shall have to give in and tell it. My name is—"

It did seem as if the fates had willed that Ned's curiosity should not be gratified.

Perhaps the Unknown actually might have told his name then if Dick had not suddenly appeared, shouting out at the top of his lungs:

"Ned! Ned! Here, quick! Edith! Oh, come here!"

"Something is the matter with Edith, as sure as shooting!" cried the Unknown, and off they ran over the edge of the hill toward the camp.

Dick, gasping for breath, came running toward them, meeting them half way.

"What is the matter?" demanded Ned.

"Edith! She's gone! Gone! There's blood on the sand!" Dick blurted out.

It seemed to Ned as if his heart suddenly stopped beating.

"Oh, Dick! Don't tell me that Edith is dead!" he cried.

"No, no, no! She's gone! Gone! And the launch is gone, and the boat is gone, too!"

It was enough for Ned to know that Edith was not lying dead on the shore to relieve his mind of the terrible fear which had come upon him.

As for the Unknown, he dashed on ahead and was the first to come into the camp.

One glance showed them that during their absence an attack had been made.

Both boats had disappeared.

The tents were there, but almost everything in the way of tools and provisions had vanished.

Down on the shore close to the water's edge the sand was stained with blood.

Edith was nowhere to be seen.

It took time to get used to it. For a moment no one spoke.

Ned and the Unknown were staring out on the lake, when Dick broke the silence by exclaiming:

"It's no use! They ain't in sight. Of course I'd have seen them if they had been."

"But how could it have happened when we haven't heard a shot fired," groaned Ned.

"It must have been while we were in the cave. There might have been a dozen shots fired and we not heard them then."

"I don't believe it. We would have heard them even in the cave."



The Unknown ran up to the top of the hill, and looking off on the lake, shouted that he could see the boats.

"There they are! There they are!" he cried. "There's a dozen men, and Edith is a prisoner among them. Oh, this is a bad job! A bad job."

When the boys joined the detective on the hill they could see the boats distinctly enough, and Dick wondered that he had not observed them when he crossed over from the cave.

They were at least a mile away.

Ned counted three boats beside the launch, which meant that the attacking party had come in two.

Edith could be seen sitting in the stern of the launch by the aid of the glass.

The poor girl had her hands tied behind her. Ned could not make out her face very distinctly, but as near as he could see, Edith was perfectly calm, as one might naturally expect.

"I'll bet she made some of them sick!" cried the detective. "Whoever was shot, it wasn't her; you can tell that by the way she sits. There! They are gone now! Question if we shall see them again."

The boats were passing in behind one of the many islands which lay scattered all over the lake.

In a moment the last one had vanished, and when after an anxious watch they did not reappear, the detective declared that they must have landed on the island.

It was a gloomy party which descended the hill to the deserted camp, you may be sure.

Ned was so overcome that he could scarcely speak, and Dick and the detective were in much the same condition.

There they stood looking at each other.

They were prisoners on the island.

But where was Edith?

Young Klondike would have cheerfully sacrificed the last ounce of his gold to have had the brave girl who had been the companion of all their wanderings back in their midst.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ATTACK ON THE CLAIM JUMPERS' CAMP.

"THIS won't do! We've got to make some move! I shall die if we stand idly here!"

Ned thus exclaiming made a dash for the tent.

At last Young Klondike had been aroused to action, and his sudden display of energy started up the detective and Dick.

"We want to build a raft and start after Edith!" shouted the Unknown.

"Just what I propose to do," replied Ned, appearing at the door of the tent with his ax, which fortunately had been left behind by the invaders. "As it is all we can do, that's what we are going to do. There'll be no gold hunting done on this island till we have Edith safe back again."

"Well, now, I guess not!" echoed the Unknown. "I see those scoundrels have left us that rope. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I feel very much under obligations to them. It will do to lash the raft together with."

"And there's trees enough up there on the hill to make a dozen rafts," said Dick, catching Ned's enthusiasm.

It was the only way, of course, but it was a slow way, and our Klondikers had plenty of time to recover from the first shock of their surprise, before they were ready to begin the raft.

The trees on the hill were all stunted cedars, and their trunks so small that it was necessary to cut down a dozen in order to make the raft strong enough to hold them all.

Ned and Dick did the work, the Unknown watching the lake from the top of the hill and dragging the trees down to the shore as they were felled.

He saw nothing of Edith, or the men, or the boats.

It began to seem certain that they had landed on the island, but still it was impossible to feel sure.

With only one ax progress seemed dreadfully slow.

After the trees were all down the branches had to be lopped off, and then came the long and tedious job of lashing them together.

The end of the short day was almost upon them, when Ned was at last able to announce the raft finished.

"There!" he exclaimed. "She's done! Now then, how are we going to make the old thing go?"

"Better put a tree in the center for a mast and sail combined," said Dick.

"That's what we shall have to do," added the detective, "and we've got to make oars, too. It will be dark before we are done."

"Can we do anything in the dark?" asked Dick.

"Can we do anything!" cried Ned; "we've got to do something. I could no more rest here to-night with Edith in the hands of those wretches than I could fly."

"Oh, I'm sure I don't want to hold back," said Dick. "I'm only trying to find out what you two think."

"I think that the darkness will be our best hold," said the detective. "I know if it was me I should wait till dark anyhow; it will give us a chance to drop on them suddenly, and that is just what we want."

"I suppose they'll be apt to show a light wherever they make their camp," said Ned, "and that will give us a clew to follow."

"That's what's the matter," replied the detective. "We want to go right to work on the oars now. Show me the ax, Ned, I'll take my turn."

"No, no! I'll do it. You keep an eye out. You may see something that I would miss."

But the detective saw nothing, for the excellent reason there was nothing to see, and at last the oars were done and night settled down upon Golden Island. All was now ready for a start.

Rifles, the ax and such provisions as they thought



they might need, in case the trip proved a long one, were placed upon the raft, and Ned pushed off.

The wind caught the bush and blew them along in fine shape, Ned steering with his oar.

"Why, this is all right," said the Unknown.

"Works first rate, don't it?" added Dick.

"If the wind only holds as it is, we shall be over among those islands in no time," said Ned. "Zed, you'll keep an eye out, of course. Hadn't you better take the glass?"

"If Dick wants to give it up, perhaps I had," replied the detective.

"Here, take it," said Dick, promptly. "Your eyes are sharper than mine. I never could do anything with a glass at night."

The Unknown showed that he could, for he had no sooner clapped the glass to his eye than he was able to report a discovery.

"Here you are!" he cried. "A light over on one of the islands, boys!"

Dick couldn't see a thing, nor could Ned, but the detective persisted it was there, and after a moment, the raft having come into a different position in reference to the island, there, sure enough, it was, just a faint glimmer of light among the trees.

"That's where we are heading for!" cried Ned. "It's on one of the islands. I haven't the least doubt that Edith is there."

"Don't be too sure," said the Unknown. "Remember all the lights we saw last night; there's more than one camp of the claim jumpers. Of course, the thing is to keep them from seeing us."

"I suppose the bush is something of a give away," said Dick.

"It is, and we may have to lower it. Leave it all to me. I shall keep my eyes wide open, you bet."

After that there was no talking for some little time. The wind held and the raft made rapid progress toward the group of islands.

The detective, who had scarcely taken the glass from his eye, suddenly called out to Dick to unship the bush.

"Do we try rowing now?" asked Ned.

"That's what. There's a man on the island looking our way."

"Think he saw us?"

"No—yes! He sees us now! Up with the bush again, Dick! No go! We've got to check it out."

Dick planted the bush in the middle of the raft once more, and on they flew.

In a few moments they were close on to the island.

The man could now be distinctly seen standing rigid and motionless with his back against a tree.

There was something very peculiar about that motionless figure it seemed to Ned.

"It gives me the shivers to look at him," he suddenly said.

The detective dropped the glass with a sharp exclamation.

"And well it may! That's no man!"

"No man!" cried Dick.

"No, sir. See if I ain't right. We've been watching a corpse!"

Here was a startling announcement, but Ned was not half surprised.

"I felt it. I knew there was something wrong. No man would ever stand there like that," he said. "What can it mean?"

"We'll soon know," said the Unknown. "Just turn the raft in a little toward the island. There, so! Now we are going right. You'll find that fellow has been murdered and is tied to the tree."

In a few moments the raft was close to the shore of the island. The man was within a stone's throw of them now; his head was bent down so that the face could not be seen; by his side was a rifle. The figure wore an old army cape coat and there were no arms visible. They appeared to be concealed under the cape.

Back among the trees the fire blazed up brightly, but they could not distinguish any one near it.

Of course, there was no talking now; the raft was run up against the beach and the detective sprang ashore.

Drawing his revolver, he hurried toward that silent sentinel, stopping all at once and throwing back his head with a loud, chuckling laugh.

"What now?" called Ned, jumping ashore.

"Hush! Not a loud word! There may be those around the camp-fire who can hear us even if this fellow can't. Come and see, Ned. Dick, you hold the raft where it is."

Dick heard Ned laughing, too, as soon as he came up to the figure.

"I'll pull the raft up on the beach, and Dick shall come and be introduced," chuckled the detective, running back.

"Thunder!" cried Dick, as he came up. "Nothing to fear from that fellow! Confound you! You gave me quite a scare. I didn't like the idea of interviewing a corpse!" And Dick gave the figure a good kick.

Over it tumbled and went all to pieces, for it was only an army overcoat hung on the lopped off trunk of a stunted cedar tree, with a big cowboy hat on top of it.

"A dummy," said the detective, coming back.

"One of those fellows left his things here. Blest if it didn't look like a man, though, in the dark. I was completely fooled."

"Hush! There he is!" breathed Ned, pointing to a big rock a little further up the beach.

A man's head could be seen projecting out from beyond the rock.

It did not move, and Ned, wondering if this could be another delusion, hurried on ahead of the Unknown, to find a strapping big fellow lying stretched out on the ground sound asleep, with an empty whisky bottle beside him, which told the tale.

"That's what's the matter," said the detective, with a low laugh. "He's drunk, and I suppose he imagined that he was undressing himself, when he



hung up his coat and hat. Ye gods and little fishes, it's a piece of luck, though. It will serve our purpose first rate."

"Just about your size, Zed," said Dick, divining the detective's meaning.

"That's what! Guess we can get into the camp all right now. Dick, work the raft off and hold it ready. Ned, I reckon I can depend upon you to follow me?"

"Oh, let me go," said Dick.

"Obey orders if you break owners," replied the detective, putting on the army coat which fitted him perfectly. "Here, take my hat, Dick. I'll use his."

"Without your plug your disguise is perfect," declared Ned, as the detective pulled the big flapping sombrero down over his eyes.

"Who d'yer say?" chuckled the Unknown, taking up the rifle which was a fine Winchester and beginning to swagger about. "Don't let anybody run up against me; I'm a bad man, I am. Young Klondike, are you ready to follow? I'm all ready to lead."

A pair of panthers could not have gone more noiselessly through the bushes than Ned and the Unknown did then.

In a moment they came out upon the top of the rise, and were able to look down into the camp of the claim jumpers, for that was what the fire meant.

It blazed before a small hut, and there were six or seven other huts nearby.

There was no one around the fire. The night had turned off decidedly chilly, and it was hardly to be expected that any one would be outside the hut except the sentinel, and they knew just where he was.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, they are all asleep here, trusting to that drunken fellow to stand guard," whispered the detective. "Ned, I'm going right down there bold as brass."

"Perhaps that's the thing to do, but I say let's try to find out who we have to deal with first."

"And how?"

"Any trouble about getting a look inside those huts? I think not."

"Amendment accepted, dear boy; there's plenty of chinks between the logs and the fire blazing in front of every door. It can be done."

"Then here goes to do it. You take one side and I the other."

It was a ticklish job this prowling about the enemy's camp, and Young Klondike stole down the hill with noiseless tread.

Coming up behind the nearest hut, he peered in through the chinks between the logs.

There were three men inside all lying off in bunks, and sound asleep.

In the next hut there were two also asleep, and in the next four men were sleeping, and one sat by the door smoking an old clay pipe.

This was the last hut on Ned's side, and he peered out to catch a glimpse of the detective and did it.

There was the Unknown peeping out from behind a hut on the other side, motioning to him.

He pointed to his rifle and then to Ned, and then to the fire.

"Confound his dumb show, what does he mean?" thought Ned, when all at once he saw the detective walk boldly up to the fire and stop.

"Hello there, Ike! What brings you back before your turn?" the smoker in Ned's hut sung out.

The Unknown, instead of answering, beckoned mysteriously.

"What in thunder ails ye?" called the man in the hut; "got a jag on again?"

"Come here! Come here, quick! I want to tell you something!" called the detective, in his deep bass whisper.

The man sprang up, and seizing a rifle hurried out of the hut.

Ned stole after him, keeping him covered.

As the man drew near enough to catch a glimpse of the detective's face, he suddenly stopped short and threw up his gun.

"Gosh all snakes! What's this!" he gasped out. "You ain't Ike at all!"

"Drop it! Look behind you!" hissed the detective.

"Yes, look behind and see me!" breathed Ned. "Here I am, Buck Budd!"

It was the rascally gambling house keeper from Dawson City sure enough.

"Young Klondike! By time, you've got me foul!" he growled, casting a frightened glance over his shoulder.

"Shoot him, Ned! Put a bullet right into his back if he moves an inch!" said the Unknown. "Now, then, Buck Budd where's that lady you took away from our camp? Where's our boats? Where—oh you would, would you! Take that!"

Suddenly Buck Budd made a rush for the Unknown.

It was brave certainly with Ned there behind him, but the gambler was a man accustomed to taking big chances.

"Up boys! Up!" he yelled, as he made the leap.

Whack came the Unknown's rifle down upon the gambler's head.

Buck Budd went down like a lump of lead.

Out of the huts the men came dashing.

They came from both sides, and Ned and the Unknown found themselves caught between them.

"Fire! Let 'em have it!" shouted the detective, in his fog-horn voice. "Come on, boys! Down with the blasted claim jumpers! Blaze away!"

And blaze away they did, and the claim jumpers blazed away, too.

It was the hottest little scrimmage Young Klondike had ever found himself in.

Nine against two are big odds, but Ned let his Winchester talk as coolly as though he was just firing at a mark.



## CHAPTER X.

## THE RESCUE OF EDITH.

ONE—two—three—four!

Down they dropped wounded, four men, one after another, and still Ned and the Unknown stood their ground.

But then the break came.

The detective saw his way out, and shouting to Ned to follow, he made a dash between two of the huts into the darkness, and away they flew, with the claim jumpers yelling like a parcel of mad dogs at their heels.

"They'll drop us sure!" panted Ned, as the bullets came whizzing around them. "Oh, if we could only get in among the trees!"

"Stop there, ye murtherin' villyuns!" they heard the well remembered voice of the Scotchman shout.

"Shoot 'em, shoot 'em! Ain't there one among you all who can shoot 'em?" Buck Budd called from the camp.

They were all trying their best, that was certain, but they did not seem to do as well aiming in the darkness as Young Klondike and the Unknown.

"We'll have to turn and face 'em, and that'll be a fight to the death!" panted the detective, when all at once there came Dick out on top of the hill and began blazing away.

It was just wonderful what an effect even this small reinforcement had.

The claim jumpers stopped short and fell back.

In a moment Ned and the Unknown joined Dick, and away they went dashing over the hill and down to the raft.

"They are coming!" panted Ned. "They are right after us! Dick, you saved our lives that time!"

"I heard the firing and came right over," said Dick. "Do we get on the raft? Is Edith there? What did you find out?"

"No, no! Edith ain't there at all. We've struck the wrong camp!" gasped the detective. "Get the bush up as quick as lightning! That's right, Ned; push off! There they come!"

The claim jumpers, plucking up courage to follow, came in sight at the top of the hill at that moment.

Perhaps they thought when Dick appeared that there were more with him—at all events, they now hesitated for a moment, and that gave the boys just the chance they wanted.

Ned and the Unknown sent several shots flying up at them, while Dick, with the oar, pushed the raft off.

The wind caught the bush, and away they flew over the lake.

In a moment they rounded the point of the island and were safe.

"Wonder if they mean to follow us?" said Ned, after they had in a measure quieted down.

"I didn't see any boat," said the detective, "but

there may be one around on the other side of the island."

"I don't believe they'll follow us now," said Dick. "They'll probably wait till daylight."

"Yes, and there are the wounded to be looked after," said Ned. "I don't believe myself they'll make a move until they've done that."

They saw nothing of the boat as they pulled away from the island, but the claim jumpers had two good ones, nevertheless.

Ned's explanation was the correct one.

Although none of the men were killed or even seriously wounded, each of those who fell had something to remember Young Klondike by, and the whole affair had been so sudden that they could scarcely realize what it all meant.

"They ain't the ones who carried Edith off, that's sure," said the Unknown.

"She wasn't in any of the huts on my side," said Ned.

"Nor mine, either. There wasn't a soul in any one of them. It's just this. Buck Budd and the Scotchman had no more idea what we were driving at than that drunken fellow whose clothes I stole. By the way, this coat is mighty comfortable. Just the thing for a cold night."

While they talked the raft kept flying on, for the wind had risen and the bush did better business than a sail.

"Keep her well in among the islands, Dick," said the detective. "I believe we shall run across another camp of these fellows before we know it. You must remember that island, Young Klondike. More than likely there's a big lot of gold there."

For the next hour the strange cruise continued.

Island after island was skirted by the raft, but no sign of camp or fire discovered.

It seemed very unlikely that any discovery would be made before daylight, but Ned would not hear of giving it up, although it was by this time entirely plain that they would have to do it.

Before morning the matter was decided for them, for the wind suddenly gave out and the progress of the raft was checked.

"Ye gods and little fishes, this ain't pleasant! How long have we got to stay here so?" growled the Unknown. "The wind seems to have gone to stay."

"That's what it has," replied Ned. "I guess we ain't going to be in it any more to-night."

They waited a long while, but there was no change.

Thoroughly tired out with all his exertions, Ned began to feel sleepy, and it came so strong on him that he just flung himself down and dropped off before you could count three.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'd like to take forty winks myself," said the Unknown.

"Try it," said Dick. "I'll keep watch."

The Unknown needed no second invitation.

He curled himself up on the logs and was soon as sound asleep as Ned.

An hour passed and still they slept soundly.



Dick began to catch the disease himself.

In fact, he could scarcely keep his eyes open.

There was not a breath of wind, and the raft was resting idly on the water.

Dick sat down and rested his head on his knees without the slightest intention of going to sleep, of course, and yet that was exactly what he did.

It was rather odd that it should happen so, but at that very moment the wind began to rise.

It came in short puffs at first, which steadily increased, and then all at once it was blowing a good stiff gale.

The raft began to move faster and faster until it was scudding along at a speed such as it had not attained at any time that night.

Several islands lay in its course, but the raft managed to dodge them all, until at last it ran hard against one and stopped with such a bump that all hands ought to have been awakened.

But Ned was the only one who felt the shock.

He opened his eyes and stared around.

"Thunder! we've run ashore!" he exclaimed, springing up. "All hands asleep? I've had my turn at it, too. This is the way to get into trouble, sure. What in the world is that?"

Right in the midst of Young Klondike's conversation with himself he heard a sharp cry off on the island.

Then there was a shout, and a noise like the throwing of a heavy stone on the ground.

"Keep away—keep away! Come near me and I'll dash your brains out!" a girl's voice cried.

"Edith!" gasped Ned.

He seized his rifle and leaped ashore, never waiting to wake up Dick and the Unknown.

A little hill with a thick growth of trees lay right before him, up which Ned bounded like a flash.

Daylight was just breaking, and before he had gone half way up the hill, Ned saw Edith running toward him with her hair streaming down her back.

"Ned! Ned! Save me!" she shouted, catching sight of Young Klondike.

It wasn't necessary for her to have said a word.

Never in all his life did Ned Golden run up hill faster, for right behind Edith was a roughly dressed man, breaking through the woods in a staggering fashion, which showed that he was more than half drunk.

Edith had a big stone in her hand, and she let it fly at the man, narrowly missing his head.

He shouted out a torrent of abuse, but kept on, and three others came after him.

Ned raised his rifle and fired.

It seemed as if this was the first they knew of his being there.

The shot was a miss, but it brought the ruffianly claim jumpers up with a round turn.

"Young Klondike himself! By time, he's got to die!" the drunken ruffian yelled.

Up went an old shotgun, but before the fellow could discharge it, Ned got in another shot which took the

man in the right arm. Down went the gun rattling to the ground, and Ned, bounding to Edith's side, flung his arm around her.

"Run! Run!" he cried. "Dick and the Unknown are right here! I'll keep these fellows back!"

Poor Edith was terribly excited. Ned had never seen her tremble so.

But for all that she was the same brave girl as ever, and with a coolness which it must have been hard for her to assume, she stopped short.

"Give me the rifle, Ned! Give me the rifle! I'll teach them a lesson they won't forget!"

She tore the rifle out of Ned's hands, and turning on the men, fired so straight a shot that the hat of the nearest was pierced by the bullet and went tumbling off his head.

This settled it.

The men turned back and disappeared over the hill, while Ned and Edith ran down to the raft.

Dick and the Unknown were still sound asleep. Even the shots had not disturbed them.

"There!" cried Ned. "There's a pretty pair of watchers for you, and do you know, Edith, I was nearly as bad. I don't know where we are or how we got here, and I don't care as long as I've got you!"

"And let me tell you that you came pretty near not getting me, then," said Edith, who was now entirely cool again. "Oh, Ned, I've had an awful time of it."

"Don't say a word. I'll just shove off the raft, if I can get it off, and then you shall tell me all."

"Oh, there ain't much to tell," said Edith. "I was sewing in the tent, Ned, when all at once I heard a footstep outside. I ran out and found myself in the midst of a dozen men who had come ashore on the island without my having heard a sound. They asked for you, but I wouldn't give them any satisfaction, for I was terribly frightened, and I had good reason to be, for they hurried me down to the boat and tied my hands behind me and stuffed a handkerchief in my mouth."

"We'll run you where Young Klondike won't find you in a hurry, young lady!" one of them said. "If he wants you back he'll have to buy you, and the price will be a quit claim deed of this whole Jennings' patent."

"Cool, by thunder!" cried Ned. "They only wanted the earth! Did they harm you in any way, Edith? Just say they did and I'll never leave here till—"

"No, no! They didn't do me a bit of harm, Ned. They just took me to their camp over on the other side of the hill here. They set me free, then, but I was closely watched and never saw my chance to break away until now. I never dreamed of any such luck as meeting you, though. If I had, it would have given me heart."

"Off she goes!" cried Ned, giving the raft a final shove. "Jump on, Edith! Don't see anything of those fellows! I guess the coast is all clear. Won't



Dick and the Unknown be surprised when they see you, though! Confound it! We all ought to have our heads knocked together for going to sleep at a time like this."

"Don't say a word! You've done your part," replied Edith. "It's a shame for us to go away and leave the launch and the boat behind us, Ned. They are both around on the other side of the island."

"We ought to have them," replied Ned, "but—"

"Ought to have what?" spoke up the Unknown, suddenly opening his eyes.

It was as good as a play to see him then.

"Edith! Ye gods and little fishes! It ain't Edith!" he cried, springing up. "Yes it is, too, and Young Klondike has done the business while I've been snoozing. Wake up there! Wake up there, Dick! By the Jumping Jeremiah, there's a pair of us here! Edith, my dear, is it all right with you? Say it ain't and I'll tell my name just as a punishment! I declare I will!"

So the Unknown rattled on while Dick woke up to be just as greatly surprised in his turn.

Stories to tell? Well, there was too much to tell entirely to attempt it then, for Ned wouldn't have it, and cut short Dick's eager question by saying:

"We want the launch and the boat if we can get them. Out with your oar, Dick, and give us a steer. We'll cruise round the island, anyhow, and see what our chance is. Wouldn't you, Zed?"

"Don't ask my advice!" cried the detective. "Don't you do it, Young Klondike! I ain't fit to be the captain of a mud scow much less of a respectable raft like this. I wish someone would kick me. I'd do it myself only my legs are so short that I can't get the purchase to kick hard enough to have the proper effect."

"Postpone your kicking till some other time," said Ned. "Are we going to be able to work round the island with this wind, or had we better put out the oars and pull back for our island?"

"Leaving the claim jumpers the launch to use against us; I say no!" replied Dick. "I feel so ashamed of myself for sleeping on my post that I don't like to advise, but we ought to have the launch if we can get it."

"Try it," said Edith. "Now that I've got you all back again, I feel full of fight. I quite agree with Dick that we don't want to leave the launch in their hands."

"Here goes, then!" cried Ned. "Steer around the island, Dick. We can go part way anyhow. I'm sure of that!"

As they rounded the point of the island, Ned kept a sharp lookout ahead.

"There's the launch!" he cried, suddenly. "I see it, and I don't see a soul near it, either. Edith, where is the camp?"

"Back quite a way from the shore," said Edith. "Ned, I believe we can get the launch."

"Work in a bit, Dick," said Ned. "We'll see what we can do; anyhow it's time enough to get scared off

when we see somebody, and if it comes to shooting, why our chance is just exactly as good as theirs."

The wind still favored them, and Dick with a twist of his oar brought the raft closer in toward the island.

"I could swim over there, and get the launch all right," Ned suddenly exclaimed.

"Yes, and get cramps and be drowned," said the Unknown. "That won't do at all, Young Klondike. Good men are scarce, and we can't spare you."

"I've a great mind to try it just the same. Can you see anybody at all there on the shore?"

"I don't see a soul," said the Unknown. "How many men are there altogether, Edith?"

"There were twelve," replied Edith, "but they were most all pretty drunk and all sound asleep when I came away."

"Some of them woke up all right and the others may take a notion to do it, too," said Ned, "still for all that I've a great mind to risk it. Work in under the shadow of that point, Dick."

Now this was a mistake, for the moment they passed around the point the wind failed them, and at the same instant something happened which brought everybody to their feet.

Suddenly a number of heads came up out of the water, heads with big hats, and hands grasping pistols.

Six men were around the raft in less time than it takes to tell it, men who were powerful swimmers and had no fear of cramp.

"We've got you now, Young Klondike!" one called out. "You might as well surrender, for we are coming aboard your raft!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE THREE IRON CHESTS.

"KEEP back there, men! Look out for yourselves! The first fellow who sets foot on this raft dies!"

Young Klondike shouted out these earnest words with the air of a man who meant cold business and nothing less.

Ned, Dick, Edith and the Unknown had their rifles up and ready in less time than it takes to tell it.

Every rifle covered its man, and the situation took such a sharp, decisive turn, that the men in the water were completely cowed.

"We don't want no trouble with you, Young Klondike; 'we just want you to get off this land, and leave us alone," said the one who had threatened Ned. "Don't shoot! Come ashore and well argue the matter out!"

"Back!" shouted Ned. "Back! We shoot no man from behind, but look out for yourself if you touch the raft!"

"Yes, but by the Jumping Jeremiah, we'll shoot



you in front if you don't turn tail before I count three!" the Unknown cried.

And these threats had their full effect.

Two of the men instantly turned and swam for the shore.

The others followed.

"We'll lay for you. We'll do you up yet, Young Klondike!" they called back as they swam away.

Just then the wind caught the bush and away went the raft spinning along the shore.

Good luck sent it toward the launch.

Ned leaned forward, caught the launch by the bow, and held on when they struck.

"Jump in, everybody!" he cried. "Luck has turned! We are all right now!"

There was a great scramble then, you may be sure.

Everything was all right in the launch, and Ned struck a match and instantly started the naphtha engine going.

"Hooray for us!" yelled the Unknown, shaking his fist defiantly at the claim jumpers, who stood watching these operations up the shore.

Apparently there wasn't a gun among them, and no shot was fired.

In a moment the launch with the boat in tow swung round the island, and they were lost sight to view.

"Ye gods and little fishes, that was done slick!" chuckled the Unknown. "Young Klondike, you're an artist. As for me, I'm a back number from way-back. I'm going out of the detective business for good, and high time, too, if I can't keep awake at my post."

The remainder of the sail back to the island was like a picnic, for no sign of the claim jumpers was seen.

Edith told the story of her adventures in all its detail, and Ned told of the wonderful strike they had made in the cave.

"Don't you fret," said the Unknown, as they neared the shore of Golden Island. "There's good fortune in store for us yet. I feel it away down in the bottom of my boots."

"Then it's too deep for us to ever see anything of it," laughed Dick. "Fancy fishing anything up from the bottom of Zed's boots!"

Everybody was in high good humor and most awfully hungry when at last they got back to camp.

Here they found everything exactly as they had left it, and Edith's first care was to start a good breakfast going, while Ned and Dick fixed up the tents and took account of stock to see how much the claim jumpers had stolen, for many of their most valuable belongings had been carried off.

"No matter. We can soon repair damages," said Dick. "I vote that we get right out of here to-day. We've seen enough to know that Golden Island is rich enough to pay us to start digging on a large scale."

"You'd go back to Dawson, hire all the men we

can get hold of, come back and clean out the claim jumpers and then go right to work," replied Ned.

"That's it; we can't fight those fellows alone, and the sooner we get them off the Jennings' patent, the better it will be for us."

"Breakfast!" called Edith, and that put an end to the discussion, for all were hungry enough to do full justice to Edith's breakfast, which proved to be first-class as it usually was.

"Now for business," cried Ned, springing up after he had eaten all he wanted. "Are there any claim jumpers in sight? Not one that I can see. Let's load up with gold and get right out."

"That means good hard work in the cave for an hour or more," said the Unknown; "by the Jumping Jeremiah, we can't jackass gold all the way through that tunnel and hoist it up out of the hole."

"We don't have to," replied Ned. "What's the matter with running the boat round to the other end of the tunnel?"

"Exactly what I was going to propose."

"And exactly what we are going to do. Get the oars, Dick, and let's start right in. I just feel as though there wasn't a moment to be lost."

They got the boat out and pulled around the island.

It is hardly necessary to say that this time Edith went with them. No one even once thought of such a thing as leaving her behind.

Around on the other side of the island, where they had a full view up the lake, was the place to see the claim jumpers, if any were coming down upon them, but they could see no one. The lake was calm and placid, its many islands standing out boldly in the sunlight, but there was no sign of either boat nor raft.

"We are safe so far," said the Unknown. "Give me an hour and we ought to be ready for a start."

Dick, who was doing the rowing, gave the boat a twist and sent her head in toward the little cove where the mouth of the cave lay.

"What a splendid place to build a wharf and a mill!" exclaimed Edith. "Could one ask for anything better than this?"

"I think not," replied Ned; "and you'll see this island humming with business if we are all spared till next spring—I promise you that."

"It will be a great diggings. I'm betting on it," said the Unknown. "I think I'll decide to come in on this. You say, Young Klondike, that all I've got to do is to tell my name, and—thunder and man, Dick Luckey! What are you about now?"

Suddenly the bow of the boat struck against something with such violence as to send the Unknown sprawling over Ned, and down both went into the bottom of the boat.

"Why, what in the world is this?" cried Edith, looking down into the clear water over the side of the boat from her seat in the bow.

"What do you see?" asked Ned.

"It looks like a big iron ring!"

"Well, I'll be hanged if it isn't! This is strange!"



"It seems to be set in the sand," cried the Unknown. "Can't understand it at all. A few years ago this place was a howling wilderness, and it ain't to be supposed that the claim jumpers can have put that ring there."

It was certainly a very mysterious discovery, and all hands having their curiosity fully aroused, they set out to investigate at once.

The ring was within a few feet of the shore in shallow water, under the high bank which skirted the beach on this side.

It was easy to imagine that it had originally been buried on the shore, and that the action of the water had in time washed the bank away.

"We'll know what that means or bust," declared Ned.

He and Dick pulled off their shoes and stockings and went out to the ring, but pull all they would they could not budge it.

The ring seemed to be firmly attached to something solid beneath the sand.

"We've got to dig for it," said Dick.

"How are you ever going to dig in the water?" asked Edith.

"Easy enough. All it wants is a little time," said Ned. "We'll build a dam right round it. I'll go back for the shovels and we'll get right to work."

Ned's plan seemed easy enough to hear him tell it, but it took a lot more time to carry it out than one would have supposed.

Stones had to be thrown down around the ring, and a big lot of earth shoveled in upon them, and rods banked upon the earth, and all that sort of thing.

At last, just as night was falling, it was accomplished, and the ring lay inside of a semi-circular dam, reaching to the shore on each side.

All that now remained was to bail the water out, which was done, and by the time it was done, it was dark, and there was no use thinking of further work until the next day, unless the ring could now be pulled up without any more digging.

But they tried it, and found it was just as firm as ever, so that ended it.

"No chance of getting away to-day," said the Unknown. "Young Klondike, I say let's move the camp round on this side of the island, where we'll have a better chance to see the claim jumpers if they come down."

"Settled," replied Ned, and they brought the tents and all their belongings around in the launch.

Supper was served on the beach, and as they ate they discussed the mystery of the iron ring.

"It may have been put there by the Russian fur traders years and years ago," suggested the Unknown.

"Did the Russians come up as far as here when they owned this country?" asked Edith.

"Yes, and further," replied the Unknown. "You see they are used to a cold climate, and really they are a very enterprising people. They had trading

posts established all through Alaska and up and down the Yukon."

"But this country never belonged to them," said Dick.

"Certainly not," answered the detective. "It was always English territory since the date of its first discovery, but you see the lines were not even as well decided then as now, and the Russian fur traders went wherever they pleased. I believe you'll find that ring is Russian before we get through. I'll bet my hat on it, if any feller wants to take me up!"

"Shoot your hat!" laughed Ned. "Winter is coming on and I want something to cover my ears. If there's anything in the whole Klondike country that I've got no earthly use for, it's your hat."

"Right you are, my boy! Get out you banjo and give us a tune. It seems good for us all to be together again. Edith, you'll give us a song?"

"Whatever the great Klondike detective says always goes," laughed Ned, and he tuned up his banjo and they had one of their old time jolly evenings, turning in early as everyone was pretty well tired out.

The Unknown insisted upon standing first watch.

"If you catch me asleep at my post again, Young Klondike, I want you to shoot me," he said. "Now I mean it! This is a time of war, and military discipline must be maintained."

But there was no sleeping on post that night.

The Unknown woke Ned at twelve and Dick took his turn at five.

By eight o'clock it was daylight, and up to that time nothing had been seen of the claim jumpers or any one else.

"Now for the ring!" said Young Klondike, after breakfast. "Watch me take it up! If I fail then we shall have to dig around it, but I don't believe it will come to that."

"What's your great scheme, Ned?" asked Dick, as Young Klondike seized the ax and hurried off up the hill where the cedar trees grew thick.

"Roll a big stone down there pretty close to the ring, and I'll soon show you what a lever can do," was Ned's reply.

"He's right, and I believe he can do it," said the detective. "Stick one of them cedar poles into that ring with a stone for a fulcrum, and something's got to give."

Ned selected a stout little cedar and cut it down, lopping off the branches and top.

With this pole in the ring, and the weight of four thrown on the other end, there was a movement at once.

They could see the sand moving around the ring, for the dam had worked in first-class shape, and during the night scarcely any water had come in.

"She's a-coming! She's a-coming!" cried the Unknown. "Bear away, boys! Lay on to her heavy! That's the talk! Now, then, once more for the beer!"

Of course the Unknown had to say something, but he had no time allowed him to say any more just then,



for all at once up came the ring with a rush, and down went Young Klondike & Co. all in a heap, but no damage done, and up they scrambled again to have a good laugh over their misfortune, and to make a rush for the ring and find out what they had struck.

There lay the ring still attached to the cedar pole on one end and to a big wooden cover on the other, which looked enough like a ship's hatch to be sure, which it undoubtedly was.

Below, deep in the sand were steps; leading down into the darkness was more mystery; a secret vault, a pirates' lair, a hidden treasure—anything you have a mind to imagine was suggested by these steps.

Ned sprang into the hole with his shovel and began to clear away the sand, which, having been dislodged by pulling up the hatch, had half blockaded the steps.

"What do you see down there?" cried Dick.

"A lot of nothing," laughed Ned. "There's half a dozen of these steps at least; bring me the lantern. More than likely they lead into another cave."

And this was precisely the case.

Dick brought the lantern and lighted it, and Ned, leading the way, they started on their exploring tour down the steps, which proved to be twelve in number, ending at a rude door which was secured by a rusty padlock and chain big enough for a jail, but so far gone that it fell to pieces as soon as Ned laid his hand on it, and he was able to kick the door in.

A damp, foul smelling hole lay before them.

Ned, flashing the lantern in, saw that it was a natural cave in the rocky bed of the island extending in under the hill.

Scattered about were rusty tools, picks, spades and bars, the remains of baskets and other things such as a miner might leave behind him. There was a table, several rude chairs and bunks built against the side of the cave also, but what attracted first attention with all hands, were three great iron chests studded with big-headed nails, all red with rust, standing in a row over in one corner of the cave.

"Blackbeard, the pirate—his treasure!" shouted the Unknown.

"An old Russian miner's gold, and I'm betting on it!" cried Ned. "Here's more of Dick Luckey's luck! Who but Dick would ever have run the boat on to that ring?"

"What's inside the chests! What's inside the chests!" said Dick. "Don't let's count our chickens before they are hatched."

He seized hold of the big iron handle and tried to lift the nearest chest—just as well might he have tried to move the side of a house.

"Gold!" cried Edith. "Is it locked, Dick?"

"Sure," replied Dick, trying to raise the lid.

The others were in the same shape, but Ned made short work of the business.

Seizing one of the iron bars he knocked open the lid of one chest.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, we've struck it—we've struck it!" fairly yelled the Unknown, tossing up his

plug hat and catching it on his head as it came down, and then, with his hands in his pockets, he went strutting about the cave.

Less noisy, but not a bit the less excited, were Ned, Dick and Edith, for the iron chest was filled to the brim with gold dust, and there were two more just like it, with their contents still unexplored.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CLAIM JUMPERS' LAST STRIKE.

"Go for the others, Young Klondike—go for the others!" cried the Unknown, wild with delight over this unexpected discovery. "I'll tell my name now! I must come in on this! I was christened Andrew Jackson, George Washington Maguiness, and that's as true as there's half a million in dust in these three chests."

In the excitement of the moment nobody paid the slightest attention to the Unknown's startling disclosure.

Ned went to work on the other chests, and soon had the lids up, for the fastenings were all rusted away.

It was just as they had expected.

There was gold in both the other chests.

One was quite full and the other banked up with the precious dust within two-thirds of the top, and on top of the dust lay a folded paper almost as yellow as the gold itself and evidently of great age.

"There's the story!" cried the detective, seizing the paper and unfolding it.

Edith bent forward with the lantern, and it is safe to say that all were tolerably sure of having their curiosity satisfied then, but it was not to be.

Water had found its way into the chest, and the writing on the ancient document was so discolored that nothing could have been made of it, even if the writing had not been in the queer Russian characters, which it was.

Ned was tremendously disappointed.

"It probably tells the story, but we shall never read it," he said. "Look! Here's a date! It's 1781—more than a hundred years ago."

And that was all they could make out of the paper, but the fact remained that they had made a great discovery, and one which, even allowing they had nothing else to fall back on and never struck another ounce of gold on the Jennings' claim, would make them all rich.

They were still discussing it, when a shot suddenly rang out overhead.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" cried the Unknown; "we've forgotten to keep watch, and here are them blasted claim jumpers down on top of us again!"

Whether the Unknown's explanation was true or false, the shot was sufficiently startling to send them all up the steps in the biggest kind of hurry.

Nothing was to be seen of either boats or raft.



The lake was apparently deserted, and yet the shot had been distinctly heard.

"What can it mean?" exclaimed Ned. "Is there someone coming up the lake on the other side?"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, no! On this side!" cried the Unknown. "Look! Look over there by that other island! We are in for it now! It's going to be a dead open and shut fight for our lives!"

Away over near the island in question, which was more than a mile away, four boatloads of roughly dressed men could be seen.

They were heading for Golden Island and they had Young Klondike's raft in tow with six more men on it.

"They are after us!" cried Dick. "It's probably Buck Budd and the Scotchman and the whole gang of them. We've waited too long. Now, what in the world are we going to do?"

"We can't run away and we can't hope to fight them and come out ahead, so the only thing for us to do is to dodge," declared Ned.

"The cave, dear boy," said the Unknown, dryly.

"Exactly so; the cave."

"It's our only chance. I believe we can make it hot for them in the cave; at least, it will give us some sort of a show."

"We could show them our heels in the launch," said Dick. "Why not?"

"And abandon these chests of gold? Half a million in dust, maybe? Dick, I don't like to do that."

"But our lives are worth more than all the gold on the Klondike."

"I see a chance for both lives and gold by retreating to the cave."

"So do I," said the detective. "I believe we can hold out for a week in the cave."

"Edith, what do you say?" asked Ned.

"Nothing," replied Edith, quietly. "I leave it all to you and Zed."

"It's the cave, then. We'll destroy the dam and let down the trap-door, run all our stuff into the cave and be ready to stand siege."

They went right at it, and before the boats were half way across the passage, between the two islands, it was done.

Of course, they had been discovered long before this.

The claim jumpers were making the best time possible and seemed to be watching the movements of the party on the island curiously.

"What will they think when we suddenly vanish," said the detective. "I don't believe they know a thing about the cave."

"Don't be too sure," said Ned. "Somebody sunk that old shaft at the other end."

"It may not have been their party at all," added Dick.

"Of course not; but if they undertake to explore the island they are going to strike it."

"Then we'll have to guard both ends of the tunnel, that's all."

So they discussed the situation until at last the time came for disappearing, and the claim jumpers in the boats and on the raft were mightily puzzled to see them suddenly vanish, for as it happened, Dick was right, and these were not the men who sunk the shaft and they knew nothing whatever about it, thus finding themselves utterly at a loss to account for the disappearance of Young Klondike and his party from the shore.

Meanwhile, Ned and the rest were watching from behind the rocks at the entrance to the cave to see them land.

"Do you feel nervous at all, Edith?" asked the Unknown.

"Well, I'd like to see the end of it, I confess," replied Edith, "but I'm ready for what comes."

"We'll drive them off the island, that's what we are going to do," said Ned. "We could hold this entrance against a hundred men, and it is even better at the other end."

"As for me," laughed Dick, "I feel as cool as a cucumber. Fact is, I'm ready now for anything rather than to run the risk of losing that half million in dust."

"There! They are right on us!" exclaimed Edith. "They are going to land."

By this time the boats were close to the shore, and they watched the claim jumpers as they sprang out and drew them up on the beach.

Buck Budd was the first to come ashore, and the Scotchman followed.

"Hoot, mon! but where are they?" he called out. "I dinna see hide nor hair of them, yet it was here they were a few minutes agane."

"Oh, they're here now, fast enough," growled Budd. "Hiding somewhere, I suppose. As long as we see their boats we know they can't get away from the island."

"And they must never get away, mon! Never, never! The gel's life may be spared with safety, but Young Klondike and his party have lived too long for our good entirely; and as for that stump-legged detective, I want his boots for winter wear, and by St. Andrew, I mean to hev them, too."

"You Scotch snoozer! I've a mind to blow the whole top of your head off right now," muttered the detective, for they could hear every word spoken. "You want my boots, do you? Let's see you get 'em. By the Jumping Jeremiah, the time for that hasn't come yet!"

"We'll divide," said Buck Budd. "Sandy, you lead half the men up to the top of the hill where you can look down on the other side of the island and see if they are anywhere along the shore; the rest of us will just march right around close to the water and keep an eye out; I reckon we'll find 'em out before many minutes are gone."

Off started the Scotchman and half a dozen men with him, while Budd and the others began prowling round the shore.



"We are as good as discovered," whispered Ned. "They'll see our footprints on the sand sure."

"And trace us here! I suppose they will," said the detective. "I declare I never thought of that!"

"You may be sure of it; that's just exactly what they'll do," said Ned. "Let's be ready for 'em! All our rifles are loaded full charge. There'll be some tall talking done before they get into the cave."

A few anxious moments followed, just about time enough for the Scotchman and his party to reach the top of the hill, and then a shout from Buck Budd told the listeners behind the rocks, that the dreaded discovery had been made.

"Here's their trail!" Buck Budd called. "I thought I'd find it near the boats!"

All crowded eagerly about him, and then they turned and made for the mouth of the cave.

"It's coming!" whispered Ned. "Now for it! We must make this the claim jumpers' last strike. Dick, you hang back through the tunnel and close the hole. There are lots of big stones there; jam one into the opening and take your place behind it. If you hear them about the shaft, fire a shot, and I'll be with you. Zed and Edith can hold this end alone."

Dick hurried off and the others waited.

"Do we open the battle, dear boy?" asked the Unknown.

"What do you say?" replied Ned.

"I say yes, if they find the mouth of the cave, not otherwise."

"They'll be sure to find it."

"Not certain. They may think this big rock is the end, but if they try to go around it, then we'll start the ball a-rolling."

"That's it!" said Edith. "Quiet now. Of course they can't hear us, but we can watch better if we don't talk."

"Sure they went this way," they heard Buck Budd call out, "but blame me if I can see how they got over them rocks and they just couldn't have gone any further along the shore."

"There's some hole or other here," replied one of the men. "Just you hold on, Buck, you'll see."

They pressed on and in a moment came in sight of the watchers.

"Don't seem to be any opening here," remarked Buck Budd, "but we'll go up to that rock and see."

"Now, Edith!" breathed the Unknown.

"Must I kill him?" faltered Edith. "I suppose I ought to, but I just can't!"

"Nip him in the arm," said Ned, "and I'll take the man next to him."

Their rifles cracked together.

Buck Budd dropped his rifle with a howl, and the man next to him did the same.

Then the detective fired and took another in the leg.

"Holy snakes! I'm done for!" yelled the gambler, and all turned and ran for dear life, for but very few of the party were armed with rifles, and knives were not in it now.

Edith fired three shots more and each did its work, but none were fatal, for the brave girl did not intend they should be, and seldom missed her mark.

"They'll let us alone for awhile now, I reckon," chuckled the detective, when all at once a shot rang out behind them in the cave.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, Dick's in trouble!" cried the Unknown.

Again a rifle cracked, and again and again, but these shots were above ground, and did not seem to come from the claim jumpers, either.

Above the sound of the cracking rifles wild shouts rang out, and there was also the sound of many footsteps running through the cave.

"The Scotchman has downed Dick and they are in the cave!" gasped Ned.

"I must help him! Edith, you and Zed hold the fort here!"

Away dashed Ned and a few anxious seconds followed, but it was all explained in a moment, for back he came with Dick and a big crowd of men at their heels.

"Hooray! We're right in it!" he shouted. "Out and at 'em! We've got force enough now to run the claim jumpers off the island or off the earth! Here are our friends who found their way down the shaft."

And so they had, for with Ned and Dick were some of the most prominent citizens of Dawson City with the mayor at their head, and upon top of the hill were as many more chasing the Scotchman and his crowd over the ridge.

Headed by Ned all now made a bold dash out of the cave, and the claim jumpers soon found that they had made their last strike.

Buck Budd, the Scotchman and several others were captured, but the majority reached their boats and made good their escape.

The sudden appearance of this strong reinforcement is fully explained in the remark the mayor of Dawson City made to Ned when the battle was over:

"You've done so much for Dawson, Young Klondike, that we thought we'd come up here and have a look at your new claim and see if we couldn't help you start it up before snow flies."

But it was really the desire to know what sort of diggings the Jennings tract was likely to afford that had sent the Dawsonians up to see Ned, for they realized that if successful, Young Klondike was pretty certain to start several new companies and they wanted to get in on the ground floor.

But Ned showed them that there was a sub-cellar below the ground floor on Golden Island, and you may be very sure the Dawsonians opened their eyes wide when they saw the three iron chests.

Half a million in dust? Well, it was so near it that it may be called so, for what the chests lacked the nuggets in the cave made up, and all was safely landed in Dawson City before the end of the week, leaving Young Klondike free to begin operations on his Golden Island, with force enough to make it healthy for the claim jumpers to jump somewhere else.



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